

# CLAY TODAY



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023

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Naturalization candidate Esra Ulukay (right) is paired with a GCSJH student, who announced her name during the ceremony.

Welcome home:

## Nation welcomes 26 new citizens

Green Cove Springs Junior High hosts emotional event for second year

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Twenty-six candidates from 17 countries were naturalized at Green Cove Springs Junior High last

SEE WELCOME, 6



## COUNTY OF CHAMPIONS

What a weekend! What a season!

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

Both Middleburg and Fleming Island highs had astounding sports performances last weekend with the Lady Broncos winning the Class 5A volleyball title in Winter Haven with a dominating 3-0 win over Barron Collier High.

A day later, Fleming Island's boys golf team was winning its first team title and the first golf championship in Clay County history behind the front-running play of sophomore Tyler Mawhinney, who scorched the Mission Inn Resort Golf Course in Howie-in-the-Hills to win the individual state title as well.

Just an hour west, in Ocala, Fleming Island senior swim freestyle sprinter Maryn McDade was winning her third straight 50 freestyle state title while finally capturing her first 100 freestyle state title.

Also for Fleming Island girls golf, the Lady Golden Eagles bettered last year's 12th place finish with a sixth place behind strong rounds from seniors Cambree Hodge and Kalia Polete.

If that wasn't enough, Fleming Island junior diver Ava Brinkman, the defending 3A champion, finished second in the state championships by a minuscule .95 points.



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY NOAH WYATT

Middleburg High setter Olivia Callipo and hitter Connor Rahn embrace in a championship hug after the Lady Broncos beat last year's Class 5A runnerup Barron Collier High, 3-0, to win the Class 5A volleyball championship Thursday in Winter Haven. The title was the first volleyball title for Middleburg.

For the Broncos, first-year volleyball coach Forkum took the reins from iconic coach Carrie Prewitt and her four decades of leading the Lady Broncos – and six Final Fours, two finals, but no titles – to the gold medal ceremony with a strong upfront presence from senior Connor Rahn, a Uni-

versity of Tampa commit, who smashed for 25 scoring strikes in a battle with one of the best hitters in the state.

See more championship coverage in the Clay Today sports pages 17-27.

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# BCC, Double Branch reach deal for new Oakleaf library

By Lee Wardlaw  
lee@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Board of County Commissioners reached an agreement with the Double Branch Community Development District to acquire a critical parcel of land necessary in addressing the long-standing need for a library in Oakleaf Village.

In October, the BCC submitted a request to the DBCDD to acquire the land. Now that it's completed, it can pursue construction.

Alexandra Compere, who represents the Oakleaf area, attended Double Branch's meeting on Monday night when they said they would agree to convey their portion of the property to the county.

The land, located on a small, empty lot at the end of Plantation Oaks Boulevard near Oakleaf Village Elementary, is split nearly in half. Currently, the BCC owns an 0.47-acre parcel and the DBCDD oversees an 0.568-acre parcel.

There are stipulations in the details. The land transfer is contingent upon the

construction of a library. A proposed community center was green-lighted by the CDD as well, but books will be the main focus. Double Branch is only willing to convey the property if the library is built. If not, it will retain the property.

"I think it gauges their level in working with us, and I think (the decision to move forward) is outstanding," said council chairwoman Betsy Condon.

The project is a significant victory for Compere's community.

"I'm just excited that they (moved) in that direction, because there's a need for (the library). I'm excited that we're moving to remedy this shortage (for Oakleaf). I just can't say enough," she said.

A nearby library bordering Oakleaf in the Argyle Forest, a neighborhood in Duval County, is charging \$175 for library cards, and the closest libraries in the county are in Middleburg and Orange Park – 35-to-40-minute commute, Compere said.

"They're very upset in that part of the county for obvious reasons, (but) I'm glad we're moving in that direction," she said.



## NEFAR:

# Median housing prices inch up in Clay County

For Clay Today

CLAY COUNTY – Traditionally, with the approach of Thanksgiving, the housing market slows as both buyers and sellers reflect on the holidays. However, observing a longer data history, this is by far the biggest seasonal slowdown seen in many years. With a few exceptions, the number of days houses sat on the market increased along with active inventory throughout the region. And prices remained high. "The monthly supply of inventory in the region increased to 3.5 months," observed NEFAR President Diana Galavis, noting there was a 19% increase since September. "Overall, the Northeast Florida market is strong with the sales median holding with very little change."

Even with the increase in inventory, the region still has a way to go before it can be considered a buyers' market, where six to seven months of inventory is for sale. One thing is for certain: homes have never been so expensive in Northeast Florida. The region's Home Affordability Index for single-family homes slid 4.5% to 63, registering at an all-time low.

The Housing Affordability Index measures housing affordability for the region. In other words, it measures whether a typical family earns enough to qualify for a mortgage on a typical home based on current interest rates, median income, and median home prices. A higher number means greater affordability. This index measures affordability factors for

all homebuyers making a 20% downpayment. An index of 100 is the point where a median-income family has the exact amount of income needed to purchase a median-priced existing home. An index value over 100 means that the family has more than enough income, while a value below 100 means that a family doesn't have enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan. The high cost of housing has a lot to do with high interest rates, Galavis said. "Interest rates reached the highest levels in October," she said. "Buyers were cautious and took a little longer to make offers, which reflected in higher median days on the market. Closed sales slid down. The home affordability index had a slight dip. The cost of goods, services, and borrowing money is much more expensive today than a year ago," Galavis explained. "Buyers are pausing to see which direction the Federal Reserve, stock investments, and the real estate market will move."

In Clay County, the October 2023 median price of single-family homes inched up 0.5%, to \$361,250. The median number of days on the market increased 37 to 42. Month-to-month closed sales fell 7.9% to 234, pending sales dropped 14.2% to 199, and new listings rose slightly by 2.6% to 356. Active inventory for the county rose to 718 homes, an 11.3% increase from September 2023 and showed a 3.1-month supply. The Home Affordability Index tumbled 4.3% to 66.5.

## Calendar

claytodayonline.com

**MIDDLEBURG GARDEN CLUB:** will host its monthly meeting on Nov. 17 from 9:30-11 a.m. at the Watson Realty Building, 2239 Blanding Blvd. Light refreshments, a raffle, educational demonstrations and resources, gardening tips, plant trades, sales, and civic projects will be featured. For more information, call (904) 343-8235 or email gardenclubofmiddleburg@hotmail.com.

**IN THIS MOMENT, ICE NINE KILLS:** will bring their Kiss of Death Tour to Daily's Place, 1 Daily's Place adjacent to EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville on Nov. 17 at 6:15 p.m. Show starts at 6:15 p.m. Tickets are available at ticketmaster.com.

**FEEDING THE 5,000:** will be on Nov. 18 at noon at the First Baptist Church of Middleburg, 2645 Blanding Blvd. Food boxes will be given away to first 1,000 people. For more information, call (904) 282-5289.

**FALL OUTREACH COMMUNITY BLESSING:** will be on Nov. 18 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Mercy Support Services, 515 College Dr. in Middleburg. In addition to the distribution of Thanksgiving Meal Bags (while supplies last), a fall photo booth, Seeds of Love Ministry Spin Wheel, games, face-painting, giveaways and BBQ will be offered.

**HISTORY HIKE:** will be on Nov. 18 at 9:30 a.m. at Camp Chowenwaw, 1517 Ball Road in Green Cove Springs. Event is free. Bring bug spray, bottled water and closed-toe shoes. You can register at forms.office.com/g/VJhtakSRir.

**GREEN COVE SPRINGS MARKET IN THE PARK:** will be on Nov. 18 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Walnut Street. Vendors will have their handcrafted goods, clothes and snacks on sale.

**FLORIDA BLUE HEALTHY WALK:** will be on Nov. 18 at 10 a.m. at the Orange Park Mall, 1910 Wells Road. Walkers to meet near AMC Theatre entrance.

**ORANGE PARK FARMERS AND ARTS MARKET:** will be on Nov. 19 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave.

**SALVATION ARMY'S THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION:** will include lunch on Nov. 19 at noon at 2795 County Road 220 in Middleburg. For more information, call (904) 276-6677.

**JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS:** will host the Tennessee Titans at EverBank Stadium, 1 TIAA Bank Field Dr. in Jacksonville at 1 p.m. For tickets, visit jaguars.com/tickets/.

**CLAY COUNTY FARM-CITY LUNCHEON:** is on Nov. 20 at noon at the Clay County Fairgrounds Exhibition Building 2, 2463 State Road 16 in Green Cove Springs.

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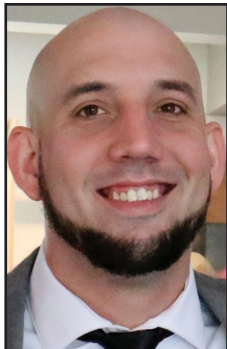
PHOTO BY REHAB CLINICS GROUP

## Avoid the triggers that derail sobriety during holidays

By Michael Leach  
Addicted.org

Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the holiday season, and many families are gearing up for celebration and cheer. Unfortunately, it is also a time associated with increased alcohol use. Thanksgiving Eve is one of the biggest drinking holidays of the year.

That poses a challenge for people trying to stay sober on Thanksgiving. The holidays are generally packed with gatherings from now until New Year's Eve. There can be a lot of temptation to overcome. Fortunately, there are practical approaches to maintaining sobriety.



Michael Leach

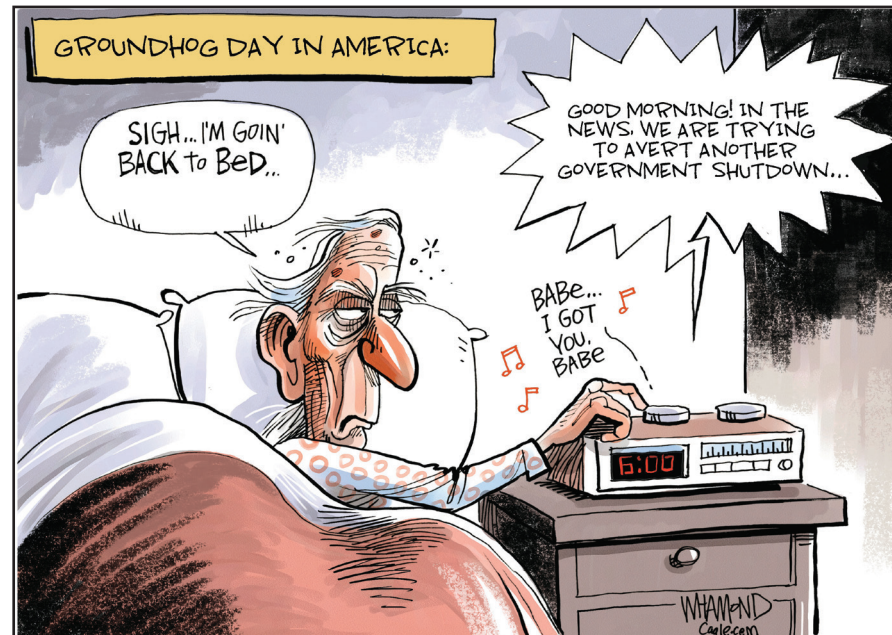
Statistically, Florida has an elevated alcohol-related death rate but one of the lowest rates of younger than 21 deaths. It's estimated 17.5% of Florida adults older than 18 binge drink at least once a month, and more than 10,600 deaths annually are attributed to alcohol use.

The best approach involves coming up with a plan to stay sober. Most temptation to drink or use drugs arises because of anxiety, depression and feeling overwhelmed during the holidays. Chaos and unpredictability create triggers. Come up with a plan before the weekend arrives. What are you going to do? Where will you go? Who will you spend it with? A little planning goes a long way.

Consider hosting your own Thanksgiving gatherings with friends or family, or tell people that you are not drinking. Being in

SEE HOLIDAY, 5

## OPINIONS



## Charging credit card fees on sales tax too costly to change

By Peter Schorsch  
For FloridaPolitics.com

Earlier this year, lawmakers rejected a measure that would have changed how credit card interchange fees are collected. Now, evidence is stacking up from elsewhere showing why the issue should stay dead.

Such fees are sometimes seen as a tax on a tax because they charge between 1% and 3% of the total transaction amount, including sales tax.

Sen. Travis Hutson and Rep. Mike Caruso carried bills in the 2023 Legislative Session that would have exempted the fees from state sales tax, ostensibly saving sellers a few pennies a sale.

But the measures failed, with credit unions and small-business leaders opposed due to its adverse effects on small businesses.

A new Council on State Taxation study offers insight into such legislation's unintended consequences.

It looks at a similar measure currently being considered in Massachusetts and found that implementing the proposed daily sales tax collection system would cost businesses about \$1.2 billion in one-time, nonrecurring costs and an additional \$28 million annually in recurring costs.

Given Florida's size and population compared to Massachusetts, such legislation could cost three times that in the Sunshine State, or \$3.6 billion in one-time costs and \$84 million in recurring costs.

The study notably did not include a cost estimate for integrating systems at financial institutions because data

**Given Florida's size and population compared to Massachusetts, such legislation could cost three times that in the Sunshine State, or \$3.6 billion in one-time costs and \$84 million in recurring costs.**

doesn't exist to create one.

As has been previously reported by Florida Politics on the Florida legislation, the COST study found that "new systems would need to be developed and implemented to accommodate the increased information flow between retailers, payment processors, and banks to implement this unprecedented change to sales tax collection."

The study also similarly noted that the legislation would benefit a rare few at the detriment of many others.

In previous reporting on the legislation, Florida Politics found that Walmart would benefit about \$400,000 a month. Still, smaller retailers who use payment processing services such as Square would lose money. Walmart can update its software in-house, while small businesses must outsource such changes.

Last month, the Florida Credit Union Association and the Credit Union National Association highlighted a new Cornerstone Advisors study outlining the drawbacks of implementing such legislation in Florida and nationwide.

The research within the study found

SEE CREDIT, 5

## Word OF THE WEEK

Word of the Week is a feature that aims to help readers boost their vocabulary in a meaningful way that has practical application. Each week, our editorial staff presents a word, its definition and its use in a sentence.

**Blithe:** (bl EYE th) an adjective that means showing a casual, cheerful but improper indifference.

"Speeding through a red light, the driver demonstrated a blithe disregard for the rules of the road."

## This Week in History

### Five years ago, 2018

- Bridge Eight Press' anthology "15 Views of Jacksonville" features a short story from author Tiffany Melanson, who shares her experiences growing up in Orange Park.

- Clay County Supervisor of Elections Chris Chambless leads a recount of over 94,000 ballots for the elections of governor, senator and agriculture commissioner.

- Citing the need to cover infrastructure costs in Green Cove Springs, water rates rose by 3% and wastewater rates by 17%. The city's existing stormwater treatment plant was described as "at capacity."

### 10 years ago, 2013

- Sara Stevens, a former intern at Clay Today, shares her experiences teaching English at an exchange program in Moscow. She eventually adjusted to Russian culture but was once refused service for being an American.

- The family of deceased Daniel Joseph Linsinbiger Jr., an inmate who was restrained and sprayed with pepper spray underneath a hooded mask, sued Sheriff Rick Beseler and eight officers over the death of their son. The medical examiner ruled the death a homicide due to the excessive force used. A \$2.2 million settlement would eventually be reached.

### 20 years ago, 2003

- Gov. Jeb Bush made six appointments to the Clay County Development Authority: Susan Wood, Barry Allred, William Simmons, David Robertson, Henry Barrow and Molly Case.

- Construction began on a new "Walmart" Super Center on the corner of Blanding Boulevard and Branan Field Road.

### Send us a letter ...

We'd like to hear from you. Perhaps you are concerned about the county commission, the school board or your city council or commission, sit down and take a few moments to write us a letter. All we ask is that you keep it civil, no name-calling and write no more than 600 words. All we ask is that you stick to local issues, be clear and make a point. We reserve the right to edit for AP Stylebook errors, grammar and spelling. In your email, type Letter to the Editor in your subject and send it to Managing Editor Don Coble at don@claytodayonline.com

### Opinions ...

The views and opinions expressed on this page are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Clay Today.

# College News

claytodayonline.com

## Porter on Dean's List at Palmer College of Chiropractic

DAVENPORT – Middleburg's Christian Porter earned a spot on the trimester Dean's List at Palmer College of Chiropractic's

Florida Campus in Port Orange.

Palmer, the first and largest college in the chiropractic profession, has campuses in Iowa, California and Port Orange.

## Credit

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that "to ensure that the sales tax information is accurate, payment providers would require validation from merchants and possibly state revenue departments for accuracy," adding that "to achieve this level of validation, merchants would be required to transmit sales data at the line-item level to support certain solutions."

Simply put, that means transaction fees would be based on looking at every individual purchase rather than the current "batch system," which expedites payments and keeps purchases confidential for the consumer. It would require new software that is an out-of-reach expense for some small businesses.

The study found that while "large retailers could afford these specialized systems at a minimal cost ... mom-and-pop shops on Main Street" would face "costs that could lead stores to stop accepting card payments or worse, close their doors permanently."

That study also raised privacy concerns, noting that "calculating interchange fees based on the purchases for an individual item will make it possible for others to see where people are spending their money."

Small businesses deal with "independent sales organizations," or ISOs. That industry designation describes most public-facing payment processors, such as banks, credit unions, or techier brands that market plug-and-play card readers, such as Square.

ISOs partner with interchange providers and repackage their services at a premium. Likewise, ISOs differentiate themselves with value adds, such as providing customer service, assuming fraud risk, and developing point-of-sale software suites that allow small businesses to accept cards without worrying about the minutiae of how many basis points are owed to each stakeholder.

If the legislation is revived and passed, that would all be upended.

Big boxes, such as Walmart and Target, and companies like Disney, can create new software to avoid potential \$1,000-a-violation fees if a processing company were to collect interchange fees on the sales tax portion of a sale. But for retailers who use ISOs, there would be a need for new software rolled out across millions of point-of-sale devices.

The time, labor and hardware costs involved in developing software and replacing deprecated POS systems would inevitably be passed on to businesses, which would be forced to either eat the cost or shift the burden onto consumers through higher prices.

*Peter Schorsch is the President of Extensive Enterprises Media and is the publisher of FloridaPolitics.com, INFLUENCE Magazine, and Sunburn, the morning read of what's hot in Florida politics. Previous to his publishing efforts, Peter was a political consultant to dozens of congressional and state campaigns, as well as several of the state's largest governmental affairs and public relations firms. Follow Peter on Twitter @PeterSchorschFL.*

sobriety, and this prevents people from asking for help. Help remove this stigma by showing compassion and understanding.

Thanksgiving does not have to be an alcohol or drug-induced blur, and family and friends can be a point of stability and help for someone struggling.

Make this holiday season a time to create memories you want to remember and celebrate with those you love. If you are struggling or know someone struggling, it's never too late to get help; more resources are available now than ever.

Michael Leach has spent most of his career as a healthcare professional specializing in Substance Use Disorder and addiction recovery. He is a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant and contributor to the healthcare website Recovery Begins.

## Sanford-Jones initiated into Omicron Delta Kappa

LEXINGTON, Va. – Raquel Sanford-Jones, from Middleburg, was recently initiated into the Lincoln Memorial University Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa, the National Leadership Honor Society. The Society welcomed 146 new initiates from seven universities.

Students initiated into the Society must be sophomores, juniors, seniors or graduate/professional students in the top 35% of their class, demonstrate leadership experience in at least one of the five pillars, and embrace the ODK ideals. Fewer than 5% of students are invited to join each year.

## Pair from Fleming Island inducted into Phi Kappa Phi

BATON ROUGE, La. – Joseph Coleman and William McMahon, both of Fleming Island, were initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for

all academic disciplines.

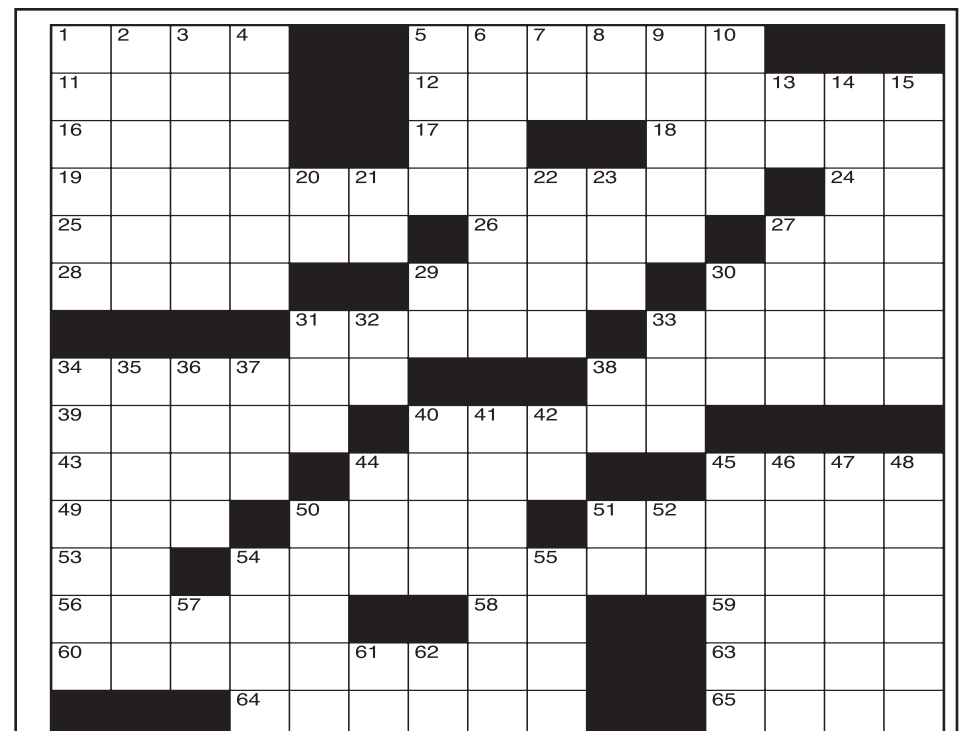
Founded in 1897, Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Phi Kappa Phi inducts approximately 25,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni annually. Membership is invited only to the top 10% of seniors, graduate students, and 7.5% of juniors.

## Orange Park's Allen enrolls at SUNY Delhi

DELHI, N.Y. – Orange Park's Abigail Allen is one of more than 1,100 students who enrolled at SUNY Delhi for the Fall 2023 semester.

Allen is pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice.

SUNY Delhi's hands-on approach to teaching and learning includes over 60 academic programs in specialized areas, including applied technologies, nursing, hospitality, veterinary sciences, applied sciences, business, and liberal arts and sciences.



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Remain as is
5. Functional
11. News magazine
12. Popular treat
16. Area units
17. Artificial intelligence
18. Marten valued for its fur
19. Forms of matter
24. Home of the Dodgers
25. Bordering
26. Part of the eye
27. It might be nervous
28. Visualizes
29. Crest of a hill
30. Measures engine speed (abbr.)
31. Tears in a garment (Br. Eng.)
33. Not easily explained
34. Song in short stanzas
38. Detonations
39. Intestinal
40. EU cofounder Paul-Henri \_\_\_\_
43. Balmy
44. New Mexico mountain town
45. Gobblers
49. Insecticide
50. Golf scores
51. Has its own altar
53. "Pollock" actor Harris
54. Being livable
56. NHL play-by-play man
58. "The Great Lakes State" (abbr.)
59. Unpainted
60. Swam underwater
63. Native American people
64. Containing salt
65. Exam

### CLUES DOWN

1. Small bone in middle ear
2. Long, angry speech
3. Move out of
4. Male organ
5. Two-toed sloth
6. Making dirty
7. Article
8. Oil company
9. Emits coherent radiation
10. Amounts of time
13. Unit equal to one quintillion bytes (abbr.)
14. Forbidden by law
15. Drains away
20. Not out
21. Sea patrol (abbr.)
22. Bird genus
23. Gratuity
27. \_\_\_\_ and feathers
29. Spiritual part of an individual (ancient Egypt)
30. Hot beverage
31. Pouch
32. It followed the cassette
33. Large northern deer
34. Ones who offer formally
35. Famed genie
36. Bequeathed
37. Skeletal muscle
38. Atomic #56
40. Silk garment
41. They deliver the mail
42. Equally
44. Check
45. Light-colored breed of hound
46. Drug that soothes
47. Railroads
48. Most slick
50. Jacket
51. A radio band
52. Hello
54. His and \_\_\_\_
55. Supporter
57. Popular software suite (abbr.)
61. Railway
62. NY coastal region (abbr.)

## Holiday

from page 4

the driver's seat is OK, which can help reduce stress and possible triggers.

Bring your own beverages or invite a friend to accompany you when attending family or friend gatherings. Practice saying no, turning down drinks, and it's OK to turn down holiday invitations.

Moreover, don't forget your coping skills and plan your exit if things go sideways before you arrive. It's a good idea to have some support in place.

In contrast, suppose you notice someone struggling with their sobriety; do not brush it aside as just the stress of the holidays. Offer a helping hand, be supportive, and avoid casting judgment. There is so much stigma associated with addiction and

# Welcome

from page 1

ceremony held at the school began with Supervisor Elizabeth Ward from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services welcoming the candidates, their families, faculty, staff and students.

Ward recognized the upcoming observance of Veterans Day in her opening remarks.

"Veterans write a blank check to the U.S. government that can pay up to and including their life," Ward said. "Thank you for your service to this great nation."

In a surge of emotion, she thanked military spouses and their families for their invaluable, devoted support. She paused and looked away for a moment.

"I'm a 26-year Navy veteran," she said. "That's all that I have to say."

Students from the National Junior Honor Society were paired one-on-one with each candidate. The students had the honor of meeting their candidates, walking them to the stage and presenting their names to Ward. The candidates then took their seats on the stage.

The ceremony was the final and celebratory step in becoming a U.S. citizen in what was, for many, an ordeal that was decades in the making. It starts with obtaining a work, school, asylum or lottery visa. The Diversity Immigrant Visa program, or green card lottery, is applied by more than 11 million people annually. Fewer than one in 200 applicants are accepted.

After obtaining a visa and meeting eligibility requirements, such as being a permanent resident for three to five years, prospective candidates can begin applying for citizenship. Candidates fill out Form N-400, which asks personal and demographic questions. The next step is a biometric appointment and interview, where applicants are asked about their background and tested on their English and civics knowledge. Completing all steps qualifies candidates for the naturalization ceremony.

New citizens were eager to tell their stories and embrace their new homeland. Arvie Cerezo from the Philippines was eager to celebrate with his family and grab something to eat after an emotional ceremony. After a 34-year ordeal, he said it was well worth the wait.

Wilawal Rascon from Thailand met her husband on Valentine's Day on a business trip. She said she was eager to start her life as a citizen with her family. The husband and wife went off to Whitey's Fish Camp to celebrate. Esra Ulukay from Turkey was joined by her son and other members of her family. She said she was lucky to be chosen



STAFF PHOTO BY JACK RANDALL

Candidates raise their right hand as they profess the Naturalization Oath of Allegiance.

and wants to make the most of her opportunity. She misses her country of birth, but she is excited and happy to live in Florida.

Rupert Davidson from Jamaica was joined by his wife; both were excited and blessed by the opportunity. He plans on starting his own real estate business here in Clay County. It has been a dream of his for a long time.

The guest speaker, Tuodora Boktor, is a teacher at school and a naturalized citizen from Egypt.

"We had the dream to move to the U.S. For four years, we had no luck. Just as we were about to give up, we won the lottery. That marked the beginning of a journey that accomplished our dreams," Boktor said.

"Leaving Egypt was bittersweet. We had to say 'bye' to our loved ones and our home. Now, we have a new home in America."

Her new home was where her sons were born.

"This is my Super Bowl," said Principal James DeMarie. "We look forward to (the naturalization ceremony) every year."

DeMarie shared his family story, how he is only a generation removed from his immigrant roots.

"My dad was 19 when he trained at Camp Blanding before heading off to fight in World War II. Growing up, he'd always ask, 'Do you know how lucky you are to be an American?'"

"One time (during the national anthem before a sports game), my dad couldn't stand up for the anthem. And he made me pick him up. I teared up on the ride home. 'What's wrong with you?' he asked.

"I realize now what I realized then: I am lucky to be an American," DeMarie said.

Director Lisa Bradley from USCIS invited soon-to-be Americans to take the Oath of Allegiance, where candidates raised their right hand to renounce all titles and past sovereign allegiances, promising to defend the U.S. Constitution and bear arms for the

country if requested by law.

Thunderous applause, a melodious rendition of "America, My Country" from the Treble Choir, the Pledge of Allegiance led by eighth grader Lucas Pham and the Clay High NJROTC retiring the colors concluded the ceremony on a high note.

The ceremony would not be possible without the efforts of Michael Taft, who teaches civics at the junior high. Learning by doing is a crucial tenet in his class.

"I hate desks and seats. I want my students up and doing things," Taft said. "We do a lot of participating and role-playing in government. We have a functioning government in class: senators, representatives, a president and me as the sole judicial member. Our students are involved in the community and at school. They'll deliver a 'State of the School' address to the student body."

The civics program at GCSJH is number one in the state.

Addison Blom, Andelyn Caraway and Martina Laureano were three of the students in the National Junior Honor Society who were paired with the candidates. Although nervous, the three shared in their candidates' excitement because they wanted to pronounce their names correctly on stage. The students enjoyed getting the chance to hear about their inspirational life stories. Despite the administrative hurdles, each candidate said they would have done so again. No matter how long or how many steps, not one candidate complained. Each was tremendously thankful, hopeful and emotional, with many tearing up as they embraced their families. Many of the new citizens missed the family and friends from the countries they left behind. Some vowed to visit again. Some realistically could not.

They clutched their flags, fresh citizen forms, and conviction for a brighter future. The candidates were lucky to be chosen, lucky for the opportunity, and lucky to call themselves American.

## Operation Lifeline to build homes for struggling veterans

For Clay Today

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A North Florida nonprofit has announced its pioneering initiative to build six homes for struggling Clay County veterans.

Operation Lifeline Inc., which supports low-income veterans through housing-focused programs, has launched an ambitious initiative called Lifeline Landing. This project will allow six local veterans to purchase homes in the Green Cove Springs area at a fraction of their value.

"Lifeline Landing is our inaugural endeavor aimed at creating a small community of affordable homes for veterans side by side in Green Cove Springs," said Erick Saks, Executive Director. "Depending on the program an individual qualifies for, they may be able to purchase one of these homes with a mortgage as low as \$75,000."




Erick Saks

According to Saks, this initiative is part of a new Clay County nonprofit housing construction strategy funded through the State Housing Initiatives Partnership to develop affordable housing for eligible Clay County residents.

"As we observed Veterans Day weekend, it's essential to remember that many veterans face unique challenges when returning to civilian life," Saks said. "Access to affordable housing is one such challenge, and it's an issue we are determined to address head-on."

With initiatives like Lifeline Landing, the team at Operation Lifeline believes they are taking concrete steps to alleviate some of these challenges.

"Lifeline Landing isn't just about providing homes; it's about creating a nurturing, supportive community where veterans can thrive, connect, and build brighter futures," Saks said. "It's about fostering a sense of belonging, providing opportunities, and giving back to those who have already given so much."



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# Moose Lodges spice up support for local projects with chili cook-off

By Lee Wardlaw  
lee@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Hundreds treated their taste buds at the 13th annual Moosehaven Chili Cook-Off and Car Show on Veterans Day. The “chow down” benefited new town organizations, Friends of the TOP Parks and the Moosehaven AAA Project.

Seasoned chefs, chili competitors and hundreds of hungry patrons from Moose lodges across Florida, Georgia, Indiana and Ohio met for the cook-off along the breezy banks of the St. Johns River. The cold, cloudy weather was the perfect setting for slurping bountiful bowls of warm, spicy concoctions. As chili pots simmered, so did the excitement for the afternoon awards ceremony. Recipes were judged and voted on in four categories: red, verde, salsa, and the “People’s Choice Award.”

Donald Perry from Wauchula emerged as the chili champion, winning first place among contestants nationwide in both the red and verde chili categories. One of his first-place recipes was served with an 80% ground chuck beef base, tomato sauce and championship-caliber blend of spices courtesy of Mild Bill’s Spices and Gunpowder Foods. The savory, seasoned taste left a profound impression.

“We don’t use a spice or seasoning older than six months. It loses potency,” Perry said.



The Ohio State Moose Association went home happy after finishing first in the “People’s Choice” category with a unique recipe incorporating brisket and other distinct elements.

STAFF PHOTOS BY LEE WARDLAW

Perry never uses spices with preservatives and never uses spices off a typical grocery store shelf. He and his brother, Tony, only use fresh, quality ingredients in their national competitions, including the recent World Championship Chili Cook-Off in Myrtle Beach.

Larry Weltikol finished first in the salsa category, followed by Matt Lusk in second and Scott Sprouse in third.

After Perry took home first for the red chili category, Jan Sprouse finished second and John Blackwell finished third.

The leaderboard for the verde chili category had a returning cast of characters. Perry, again, took home first place. Sprouse and Blackwell traded places: Blackwell finished second and Sprouse finished third. The Ohio State Moose Association won the People’s Choice Award with their pot of delicious, smoky, mouth-watering flavor that made those who had a sample feel like they were sitting by the campfire. The Indiana Moose Association was second in People’s Choice.

While not winning an overall award, The Georgia Moose Association won the “Best Booth” award with their Georgia football tailgate and fall festive theme.

Moosehaven’s 13th annual Chili Cook-Off was a spicy success, proving a warm bowl of chili fends off a windy, “chilly” day.



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# Organizations unite to make sure nobody goes hungry on Thanksgiving

Dinners, food drives to heal lonely hearts, fill empty cupboards, refrigerators

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY – Four churches will unite for a common good on Thanksgiving Day to ensure nobody is alone and everyone is fed. The Springs Church, First Baptist Church of Orange Park, Celebration Church and St. James AME Zion Church will work together for the annual Community Thanksgiving Meal.

The Thanksgiving Day tradition has been at First Baptist Church of Orange Park for the past 20 years, but it will move to The Springs Church at 900 Park Ave. in Orange Park on Thanksgiving Day. Anyone unable to prepare a meal for their families or alone is welcome, according to Outreach Director Ilya Mikhalevich.

“Orange Park did it for years, but their director is looking to retire,” Mikhalevich said. “In the past, they’ve done about 800 meals, if not more. We’re new to this. We wanted to take it on.”

Meals will be served from noon to 2 p.m. at the church. Anyone who needs a meal delivered should call Kathy at (904) 525-0762, Ruth at (904) 214-5120, Sandra at (904) 537-4227 or Shirley at (904) 537-5422 before Thanksgiving to arrange a delivery or pick up.

Smoked turkey, dressing and gravy, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, cornbread and rolls will be on the menu. Beverages will include hot cider, coffee and tea. Holiday pies are for



Thousands in Clay County will have food on the table during the Thanksgiving holiday, thanks to the work of hundreds of volunteers and the generosity of residents who donated money and food.

dessert. Mikhalevich said the majority of meals were delivered in the past.

“With the way the economy is going and the way churches are going, there is a lot more interest this year,” Mikhalevich said. “Everyone is stepping up.”

There are other organizations that plan to embrace the community during a time of thanks, especially on Saturday, Nov. 18, including:

- Mercy Support Services Fall Outreach Community Blessings will run from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 515 College Dr. in Middleburg. Thanksgiving meal bags will be distributed, and visitors can enjoy a photo booth, Seeds of Love Spin Wheel, games, face-painting, giveaways, BBQ and community resident presentations.

- One of the biggest events is Feeding the 5,000 at the First Baptist Church of Middleburg at 2645 Blanding Blvd. Boxes will be packed with enough food to feed a family of five, and they can be picked up from the Packing Pipeline drive-through event at noon to the first 1,000 families. There is a limit of one box for each family. For more information, call (904) 282-5289.

- The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry Thanksgiving Outreach will wrap up on Saturday. Residents from Orange Park and Fleming Island can sign up for a complete Thanksgiving food basket, and children 14 and younger can pick out a toy from 9 a.m. to noon at 1010 Fromhart St. in Orange Park. For more information, call (904)

264-5239.

The generosity will continue on Sunday, Nov. 19, with:

- EXIT Inspired Real Estate will host its Thanksgiving Food Drive and Fall Festival from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 2739 Blanding Blvd. in Middleburg. The event will include food vendors, games, photo booths, prizes and more.

- Calvary Church will host its Thanksgiving in the Park on Nov. 19 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Ronnie Van Zant Park, 2760 Sandridge Road in Green Cove Springs. All are invited to a free meal, but everyone is asked to bring a dessert.

- Mission of the Dirt Road Rag Tag Thanksgiving will be at 11 a.m. at 7790 State Road 100 in Keystone Heights. Everyone can enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving meal, and anyone is welcome, but not required, to bring a side dish.

- The Salvation Army’s Thanksgiving celebration will include lunch after Sunday services at 2795 County Road 220 in Middleburg. For more information, call (904) 276-6677.

- On Wednesday, Nov. 22, residents are invited to the Salvation Army’s food distribution event from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at 2795 County Road 220 in Middleburg.

- And on Thanksgiving Day, Mackey’s Munchies Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway will be from noon to 3 p.m. at 868 Blanding Blvd. in Orange Park.

## Obituaries [claytodayonline.com](http://claytodayonline.com)

### Nellie Louise Brooker

Nellie Louise Brooker, 77, of Green Cove Springs, FL, passed away November 12, 2023

Please sign the family’s online guest-book at [www.broadusraines.com](http://www.broadusraines.com)

Arrangements are under the care of Broadus-Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. (904)



### Pauline G. Markland

Pauline G. Markland, 91, of Orange Park, FL, passed away November 14, 2023

Please sign the family’s online guest-book at [www.broadusraines.com](http://www.broadusraines.com)

Arrangements are under the care of Broadus-Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. (904) 284-4000.



### Dorothy J. Yates

Dorothy J. Yates, 78, of Orange Park, FL, passed away November 13, 2023

Please sign the family’s online guest-book at [www.broadusraines.com](http://www.broadusraines.com)

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JACK RANDALL

R.M. Paterson Elementary faculty, staff and students show their support for veterans and their families.

# Paterson Elementary honors veterans during ceremony

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Veterans and their families were honored at the Veterans Day ceremony at R.M. Paterson Elementary on Thursday, Nov. 9. Principal John O’Brian expressed gratitude during opening remarks on a pleasant, sunny morning. Four students read from their handwritten, heartfelt essays that expressed admiration and appreciation for the country. Veterans of all branches were in attendance, and

each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces was honored with its official marchpast during an Armed Forces Medley. “The Army Goes Rolling Along” was played for the Army; “Anchors Aweigh” for the Navy; “The Marines’ Hymn” and “The Wild Blue Yonder” represented the Air Force, and “Semper Paratus” was played for the Coast Guard. Afterward, a bright orange Coast Guard helicopter circled overhead, with Guardsmen waving to cheering students and their families.



## County goes green to support veterans

PHOTO BY CLERK’S OFFICE

CLAY COUNTY – Green lights were lighting the sky throughout Clay County last week, representing something steeped in pride: support for our country’s veterans. Operation Green Light is an initiative of the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. The goal was to let veterans know they were seen, appreciated and supported by blanketing county buildings with green lights through Veterans Day. Here in Clay County, pride for our country and respect for our veterans ran deep. The goal was to create an unmistakable show of support for the men and women who dedicated their lives to our freedoms.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS ROTARY CLUB

## Rotarians bring the heat to support Wounded Warriors

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Preston and Martha Mangus with the Rotary Club of Fleming Island hosted their Annual Chili Cook-Off on Veterans Day to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project at the Mangus Hanger. Mark Easterling’s classic pot of beefy Tex-Mex stew won first place – and the Golden Peacock Award. Along with WWP, the club also is taking donations for Wreaths Across America (wreathscrossamerica.org/). Veterans Day weekend is the time for celebrating and paying a special tribute to those who have devoted themselves to service for their country, often putting their very lives on the line.



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# Golden Corral serves up support for veterans with free buffet

Annual event attracts 826 former, current servicepeople in Orange Park

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Lawrence Johnson wasn't concerned last Monday when the line for Military Appreciation Night stretched to the back of the Golden Corral parking lot and doubled back to the front door.

He had more than enough steak grilling. And Meatloaf. Mashed potatoes. Ham. Turkey. Tacos. And, of course, the famous freshly baked yeast rolls.

The buffet chain has been feeding veterans to celebrate Veterans Day for the past 22 years. But for Lawrence, the franchise owner of the Orange Park restaurant, the annual event has a deeper meaning.

"It was beautiful," he said. "You couldn't ask for anything better. We work with our DAV (Disabled American Veterans Bradley S. Crose Chapter 38) for a lot of things. They also help us with our Camp Corral to send kids to camp. They have been great partners."

The local DAV chapter meets regularly at Golden Corral.

Although the free offer didn't start until 5 p.m., hundreds were already in line an hour early. It got them through the doors quicker and allowed them to share stories of their service.

"To me, it's the fellowship and the respect you gain from the community," said retired Maj. Joe Shaw. "It gives us the opportunity to show those who didn't serve we're still here."

"The older veterans get to talk and hear the stories. It's the camaraderie for me," YNC Cedric Harris said.

"We're still here. We served our time," said retired Sgt. Major Brian Coleman. "We appreciate them (Golden Corral) recognizing us for our service. I was born and raised here. I did 34 years, and I came



The lines were long, but there was plenty of food at the Military Appreciation Night at Golden Corral in Orange Park. Restaurant owner Lawrence Johnson, right, made sure everyone could enjoy a steak, while members of the Orange Park NJROTC volunteered to keep the serving area clean.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

back home."

After hosting 712 veterans a year ago, Johnson said his restaurant served 826 veterans. He was ready with plenty of staff, cooks, food and volunteers from the Orange Park High Navy JROTC, who cleaned the serving areas. When the first veteran hit the line, he had a mound of steaks already cooked on the grill.

"When we opened the doors, the steaks went quickly," Johnson said. "The line went to the back of the restaurant. But we were ready. It was our honor to feed every one of them."

"We have a beautiful time. A lot of the co-workers have been here for 30 years at this location, so they already knew what to expect. It was easy to get them in. We were properly staffed to handle that many people. It was a wonderful show. I really appreciate them. I'm sure they appreciated it, too," he said.



# Keystone Heights' American Legion Post 202 honors veterans



By Natalie Gilstrap  
For Clay Today

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Residents came to American Legion Post 202 behind City Hall

to honor the men and women who served in the U.S. military.

"We are so blessed and honored to be here to honor our veterans," said Vice

Mayor Christine Thompson.

American Legion welcomed the audience before starting with an opening prayer. In addition, the Keystone Heights JROTC presented the Colors, and the American Heritage Girls Troop 7448 led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Thompson spoke about Veterans Day and its meaning. Guests heard from local veterans like Richard Hall, Robert Protomastro, Jean Alexander and Fred Dressel, who talked about their experiences in the military and what it means to be a veteran. Guests were reminded of Wreaths Across America.

The event closed with prayer and had a complimentary lunch provided by the American Legion and Amvets Post 86.

"It had a great turnout for Keystone Heights," said George Owen, 2nd Vice at The American Legion Post 202. "We support the veterans, we support the families of veterans, and we support the community in which that American Legion Post is located."

The organization helps veterans with various needs such as health care, finances, and assistance with their VA Disability Claim. They also provide a social hub in which veterans can congregate and enjoy each other's company. However, the organization not only helps veterans but is also open to the public and provides various programs to the community.

# Fleming Island leads Clay success at state band competitions

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

Senior tuba player Seth Massey celebrated the success of Fleming Island High's second-place finish last Saturday instead of ruminating about not finishing first.

"We gave 100%, and that's all you can ask for," Massey said. "We were very pleased with our finish. It will make them work twice as hard (in the future)."

Fleming Island earned 87.1 points after being judged for music and visual effects in three categories – ensemble, individual and general effects. Orlando's Timber Creek was awarded 90.85 points. According to Assistant Director of Bands Alexander Buck: "The icing on the cake was the Best Individual Visual Caption award, recognizing the students' exceptional mastery in maneuvering and handling their bodies while marching."

Long-time Band Director Mara Rose said this year's championship ended her career on a high note.

"I am so proud that this group of students got to be my last," she said.

Fleming Island was one of five Clay County schools to finish among the top nine in their classifications. Oakleaf was fourth in Class 5A, while Orange Park was fourth to Pembroke Fines Somerset Academy in 3A; Ridgeview was seventh to Hialeah Gardens in 2A and Middleburg was ninth to Wesley Chapel Wiregrass Ranch in 1A.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY FLEMING ISLAND HIGH

Fleming Island started working on its routine for the Florida Marching Band Championships months ago, and its "This Human Heart" earned Eagle Band One a runner-up finish the Class 5A competition last Saturday in St. Petersburg. Oakleaf finished fourth in 5A, while Orange Park was fourth in 3A, Ridgeview was seventh in 2A, and Middleburg was ninth in 1A.

"We were very satisfied with our show because we did the best we could do," said Chau Tran, drum major for Fleming Island. "I'm proud of our medals. It was really interesting to see the ideas other schools came up with."

The Eagle Band One's season isn't over. After marching in the New Year's Day parade in London to kick off the year and finishing second in the state competition, Fleming Island will march on to one of the most famous stages in the world. The school will play at Carnegie Hall in New York City in April.





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# On the movie set of 'Rights of a Father'

Film extras invited for 'jury duty'

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Director Junior Ashwood hardly ever sat in the chair labeled “Director.” Instead, he stood eagerly right in the action, just right out of frame. The director has a keen vision for “Rights of a Father” and the passion and patience to tell a compelling, thought-provoking narrative. Should an expecting father have a say over his unborn child?

“Cut! Just like that! One more time!”

“Rights of the Father” is Clay County resident Ashwood’s sophomore production following his film debut of “First Coast Affair.”

The film presents a unique perspective on family versus career, paternity versus maternity. The premise begins with Raymond, who is overjoyed upon learning his fiancé is pregnant. Rose, his fiancé at the start of her promising career, reluctantly tells Raymond she is considering other arrangements to deal with the pregnancy. Out of options, the couple takes their unflappable disagreement to court. In an electric courtroom battle, Raymond sues Rose to carry their child to term and deliver the child to him to raise as a single parent.

“Rights of a Father” needs you to be a film extra for the jury. Extras can participate in the cast and production.

Extras are asked to dress in business casual, as they would for jury duty, as they will have screen time and will be included in the film credits. Filming will be at 8 a.m. at the Historic Clay County Courthouse at 915 Walnut St. on Nov. 19, Dec. 3 and Dec. 9. Filming will also take place at the current Clay County Courthouse at 825 N Orange Ave. on Dec. 2, at 8 a.m.

“I will make sure any and all extras are in the film. I have plenty of room for them in and out of the courthouse scenes. The only thing needed to be prepared as an extra is to show up on time and be ready to shine on camera,” said Ashwood.

On jury duty, extras will have the opportunity to witness the cast in action.

Julie Jones plays the plaintiff’s attorney, Jordan Moss. She is excited and honored to debut in her first lead role. She says this production has an important political message in the conversation regarding women’s and men’s rights, where one ends and the other begins. Jordan Moss is the protagonist, Jones said. However, the audience will empathize with the other side.

George Smith plays the defendant’s attorney, Drake Wells. Smith was inspired by his parents, who were both in theater. He participates in the annual Jacksonville 48 Hour Film Project, which is part film festival, part speed run. Having only “48 hours”



Director of Photography Michael Carter (left) and Director Junior Ashwood (right) line up the shot for the next scene.

to plan and act in a film has allowed the actor to be quick on his feet, confident and capable on set.

The dynamic between the characters of Smith and Jones is a film highlight. The actor and actress have chemistry when the cameras are off as much as when they’re rolling.

“I am on the winning side,” said Smith, taking five.

“That’s interesting that you think so,” responded Jones.

Later, when filming was set to begin in the courtroom, Jones took an extra moment to rehearse her lines.

“She’s not ready, your honor,” Smith quipped.

While the cameras were rolling, Smith briefly forgot his lines as he addressed Jones’ character.

“You should be ashamed of ... of ...” he said, trying to remain in character.

“No, YOU should be ashamed,” Jones quipped back.

The off-camera rivalry is all in good fun, an iron-sharpens-iron philosophy. Because in the context of the film, the attorneys’ stakes couldn’t be higher. The court case is over the life of a child at a potential cost to a family.

Darcy Stinnette plays Rose Lane, the defendant, the pregnant and paralyzed mother with a bright professional future.

“Being Rose is so interesting because she has such an interesting dynamic. She is still in love with Raymond. But if they’re really in love, why not wait? Rose hasn’t even enjoyed her engagement. Rose would be the one carrying the baby to term. The news is jolting.”

In her own personal life, Stinnette has suffered complications with pregnancy. She channels feelings of that difficult, emotional time in her life as she portrays Rose



STAFF PHOTOS BY JACK RANDALL

George Smith (left) as Drake Wells “faces off” with Julie Jones (right) as Jordan Moss.

on set.

“(The film) is as emotional as it is political. After a scene, (Blue) would check up on me. I lost my voice screaming (in character) during filming yesterday. That’s why my voice is hoarse today.”

Especially in the context of Roe v. Wade being overturned, Stinnette commented on what it meant for Rose and her child to be on trial.

“My parents and friends in real life have their own thoughts. We all have our thoughts. Rose is a whirlwind trying to grapple with her feelings. She’s forced to take on the feelings of others. There’s a lot of conflicted feelings and nuance that I want to convey to the audience.”

She continued.

“In Rose’s view, she wants to give Raymond the world but is not ready to give it. So, he’s taking it.”

Greg Blue plays Raymond Carter, the plaintiff, the father who believes in the sanctity of life and is willing to do whatever it takes to hold his child one day.

“When portraying Raymond, I want to put myself in his shoes. Raymond is taking drastic steps because he loves his family above all else. Childbirth isn’t an everyday occurrence. (Raymond and Rose) are already financially (secure). Starting a family is not something Raymond would allow to be put off.”

Blue said it’s rare for men to win custody battles over their children. Men provide financial support but are not commonly viewed as primary caregivers. For a variety of sociological factors, single fathers are a significantly smaller percentage than single mothers.

“A tremendous joy in my life is my nephew. Friends and relatives assume he’s mine. In my own life, I plan on having a child of my own. Yes, I am channeling those feelings to resonate with Raymond’s motivations. ‘In a perfect world, it wouldn’t have come down to this. But I will be saving my child. Whatever it takes. So be it,’” Blue said.

“It’s baby fever meets birth control,” he summarized.

Production Manager Kristal Stallings is eager to entertain as much as she is to

foster dialog. She is responsible for ensuring consistency between shots and scenes. She talked to actors one-on-one to communicate the intention of each scene. She wanted to portray the subject matter with respect. She said that it was intentional for a woman to represent the plaintiff and a man, and a man to represent the defendant, a woman.

“Once people see the message, it will open up a lot of conversation,” said Stallings.

The director laughed when he realized his film would be premiering next year, an election year.

“Honestly, that wasn’t planned,” Ashwood said. “I’m bracing for a lot of smoke, especially after (Roe v. Wade) was overturned.”

The director is determined to share his film and his story, regardless of controversy. He is thrilled to work with such a dedicated cast. After filming in Green Cove Springs, he plans to film at the Hoptinger bar in downtown Jacksonville, then Middleburg and Tampa.

“This is a huge step up from ‘First Coast Affair,’” he said. “You’d think I’d be (overwhelmed), but the cast is one cohesive unit. Everyone has their own lane. Everyone has their job. Everyone is helpful.”

“I want (the audience) to lean back and think, ‘I didn’t think about it in the angle. I didn’t think of it from that perspective.’ When men become fathers, it’s as if the courts turn around and tell them to ‘sit down and shut up.’ Where do the father’s rights begin? Let’s turn the conversation. Let’s not just say, ‘My body, my choice.’ Because it takes two to make a life.”

On the other side of the country, Hollywood, California sits on the other end of I-10.

“To think that over 100 years ago ‘Hollywood’ found its start in Jacksonville and then moved across the country at the whim of an oil tycoon,” said Dean Phillippi, who plays the judge.

With his talented cast, Ashwood plans to bring the silver screen back home. “Rights of a Father” will premiere at Terry Theater in Jacksonville in spring 2024.

# Orange Park pays homage to veterans at Magnolia Cemetery

By Lee Wardlaw  
lee@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – The community gathered to pay tribute to those who served in the military for the 13th annual Veterans Day wreath-laying ceremony.

Beneath the oak trees at the Veterans Memorial in Magnolia Cemetery, active-duty soldiers and veterans, military families and residents gathered to watch the laying of the wreath by Capt. Ed Turner and Vice Mayor Susana Thompson. The Historical Society also recognized deceased veterans with new pavers paid for by local donors. They replaced old, worn pavers, some bleached and weathered, with modern laser-etched pavers.

After a special flyover from the Dreamland Squadron, attendees heard from Turner, a distinguished U.S. Navy veteran with an illustrious career spanning 31 years.

He thanked veterans for their unwavering commitment to defending freedom at all costs, a sacrifice that some residents fail to realize must be made daily. Regardless, the defense of the country by the armed forces never fails to rest, Turner said.

“From the American Revolution to the current war on terror, our nation was important enough to endure long separations from families, miss the birth of their own children, freeze in sub-zero temperatures, roast in faraway deserts and possibly lose limbs or suffer from traumatic physiological damage,” he said.

Turner, whose service entailed more

than 4,000 flight hours and six overseas deployments, including a combat deployment on the U.S.S. Roosevelt for Operation Desert Storm, is now the National POW/MIA Executive Director at Cecil Field.

“How appropriate is it that the (National POW/MIA) Memorial is right here in Jacksonville, with support from Orange Park families (and others in the local community),” he said of the facility honoring the over 81,300 soldiers still missing since Dec. 7, 1941.

Following his powerful words, Turner and Thompson laid the wreath. Then, the First Coast Highlanders immediately broke into a stirring military set, with the orchestra of bagpipe players evoking patriotic emotions among all active-duty soldiers, veterans, families and community.

Two students – Ishara Monsivais, a sixth-grader at Orange Park Elementary, and Sophie Aranaga, an eighth-grade student at Orange Park Junior High – were honored for their award-winning essays, “What is Veterans Day.”

The two were selected from a pool of essays submitted from eight local schools.

“The defense of freedom is not just for those in the military, but for each of us, both you and I. We should all share in the duty of that responsibility together. If we want to preserve our freedoms, we must put them into action,” Thompson said.

The American Post No. 250 riders, who play an integral role in conveying a message of support for veterans, stood guard.



Above: Sophie Aranaga, an eighth-grade student at Orange Park Junior High, earned first place in the junior high school division alongside Ishara Monsivais, who wrote the first-place elementary school essay. Both expressed their appreciation for veterans.



Van Hogan of the Historical Society of Orange Park provided the welcoming speech and the pledge of allegiance.



The First Coast Highlanders have attended every Veterans Day wreath-laying ceremony since the tradition began 13 years ago at Magnolia Cemetery.



## Faith Walk

by Pastor Billy Register  
True Life Church  
Clay County

This is a beautiful time of the year. A time when we enjoy good food with family and friends. We also should take the opportunity to share the things we are most thankful for. Living with a spirit of thanksgiving is how God has called us to live our lives.

Psalms 106:1 says, “Praise the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” (NLT)

We are called to live joyful lives that radiate God’s love, peace, hope, and yes, THANKFULNESS!

That means that we must cultivate a thankful heart in our lives. No, the world isn’t perfect. We are living in a fallen world that is often in direct opposition to the ways of God. That means that we will inevitably face trials in life. But that doesn’t mean that we still shouldn’t be thankful.

The most amazing thing that God promises those who believe is eternal life with Him. There will come a time for all Christ-Followers when we meet Jesus face to face and the pain of this world will be no more. If nothing else fills us with thanksgiving, this most certainly should! This single promise should give us all the strength, comfort, and joy we need to reflect a spirit of thanksgiving every day of our lives.

Living with a spirit of thanksgiving changes not only our lives but the lives of those around us! Remember, perspective is everything. Your perspective will dictate the course of your life, and the way you live your life will influence others. When you radiate the kind of joy and peace that comes from living with spirit of thanksgiving, it’s contagious. Those you associate with catch it and that same attitude begins to influence their life.

Make this Thanksgiving season a time to reflect on all the amazing gifts and promises of God. Commit to living with a spirit of thanksgiving today. It’s one way to live your best life!

May God’s blessing and favor rest upon you and your family this Thanksgiving season!

You can write the Pastor at [pastor-billy@findtruelife.com](mailto:pastor-billy@findtruelife.com).

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## Police Briefs

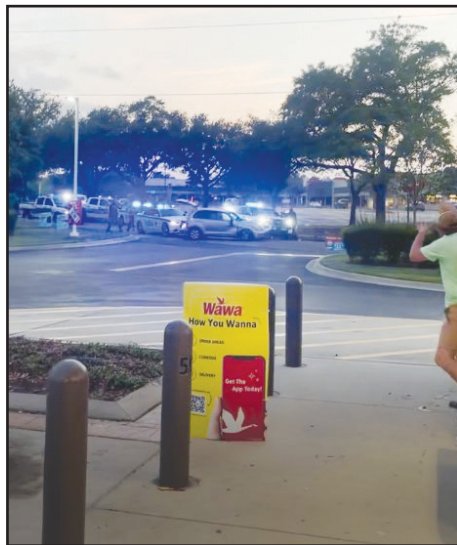
claytodayonline.com

### State Attorney: CCSO justified in fatal shooting of Danny Palato

CLAY COUNTY – The Clay County Sheriff's Office learned the investigation by the State Attorney's Office and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement determined the April 27, 2022, fatal shooting of an Orange Park man was justified.

Danny Palato, 39, was killed after deputies performed a PIT maneuver on Filmore Street near the Wawa store on Blanding Boulevard to end a chase that started in Orange Park. After Palato's SUV was stopped, deputies approached and yelled for him to show his hands. When he appeared to reach for the floor, they opened fire and killed him.

Two men who were eating a sandwich behind the convenience store saw the incident. They started recording it with a cellphone during the chase, not realizing they would capture the moment Palato was killed. The men, Adam German and Zach-



ry Kellar, gave the video to FDLE, and they both were interviewed.

"The lead cop car was able to get up close to him and actually picked it up and spun him out," German said. "The lead car cop got out the police officers behind and then got out and proceeded to pull their

firearms saying, you know, yell, 'Put up your hands! Let me see your hands! I heard that. I heard them yell at him.

"And then they started opening fire."

The men said deputies quickly created a perimeter and pushed everyone back. Because of that, they didn't tell them what they just witnessed. "We witnessed this," Kellar said. "I heard him (CCSO deputy) say, 'Put your hands up. Don't move.'"

According to police reports, the chase started after someone called about a domestic violence event.

In a release by CCSO, the agency said, "We believe these independent, outside investigations provide our community with the most transparent and trustworthy process for examining any fatal use of force encounter involving CCSO personnel. Maintaining transparency and public trust will always be guiding principles for the CCSO. We are also thankful for the men and women of the CCSO who put on the uniform every day. They put themselves in harm's way and sometimes must make critical split-second decisions to keep themselves and the citizens of Clay County safe under very difficult circumstances. The shooting of Mr. Palato and any loss of life is tragic,

but law enforcement officers have an obligation to protect themselves and members of our community."

### CCSO: Man arrested for using knife, broom stick during carjacking

ORANGE PARK – A Jacksonville man is behind bars with a \$410,011 bond after the Clay County Sheriff's Office said he carjacked a man with a knife and a broomstick and for striking a deputy with a sharpened stick before being tased and arrested.

Rasheed Nafrud Najim, 21, faces armed carjacking, battery on law enforcement, aggravated battery and resisting arrest after CCSO said Najim got into an occupied car and struck a man with the stick on Nov. 12 in the 300 block of Blanding Boulevard. According to the arrest report, when deputies arrived, Najim tried to run. The first attempt to tase him failed, and after he struck the deputy with the broom handle, they managed to incapacitate him with a second taser deployment.

Najim will be back in court on Dec. 19.

**SEE POLICE, 15**

## Arrests & Bookings

claytodayonline.com

Compiled by Don Coble

(Name, age, location of arrest, charges). Key: FTA-Failure to Appear; DWLSR-Driving Without a License-Suspended or Revoked; DUI-Driving Under the Influence; VOP-Violation of Probation; BAL-blood alcohol level. There are no assumptions or representations about guilt or innocence. Anyone arrested or booked is presumed innocent.

### Tuesday, Nov. 14

Taurrek D. Fikes, 29, Fleming Island, felony domestic battery by strangulation, resisting law enforcement with violence, hinder communication to law enforcement/judge

Larry O. Brown, 47, Middleburg, two counts DUI with property damage/injury, failure to stop after crash with injuries, failure to leave information on unattended vehicle

Lisa M. Davidson, 60, Orange Park, DUI with BAL .15 or higher

Shannon D. Colson, 53, Orange Park, trespassing

Jonathan R. Pacheco, 43, Keystone Heights, burglary, two counts molesting vending machine, grand theft, felony criminal mischief

Alana N. Bird, 20, Middleburg, shoplifting

Christine A. Thorp, 30, Green Cove Springs, vandalism

Duncan J. Lloyd, 21, Green Cove Springs, VOP-domestic battery

Shonda J. Riley, 48, Keystone Heights, trespassing

Hennessey M. Johnson, 26, Fleming Island, possession-marijuana

Sadie R. Fletcher, 23, Fleming Island, DUI

Kevin W. Webb, 55, Keystone Heights,

trafficking-fentanyl, possession-methamphetamine, possession-clonazepam, possession-alprazolam, possession-cocaine, possession-drug paraphernalia, DWLSR

### Monday, Nov. 13

Alton R. Gue, 59, Keystone Heights, disorderly intoxication

Melina S. Hodges, 49, Fleming Island, possession-marijuana, possession-drug paraphernalia

Minor C. Catledge, 59, Green Cove Springs, attempting to flee/elude law enforcement with lights/siren active, DWLSR, failure to register vehicle

Kathryn B. Kelly, 48, Middleburg, domestic battery

Joseph J. Betros, 36, Middleburg, larceny, grand theft auto

Elijah L. Carson, 22, Green Cove Springs, VOP-possession-cocaine with intent to sell/manufacture/deliver, VOP-trafficking-phenethylamines, two counts VOP-selling cocaine

Jose A.D. Cruz, 52, Oakleaf, battery

Robert A. Bryant, 34, Orange Park, DUI with property damage/injury

### Sunday, Nov. 12

Addiel A.H. Vazquez, 28, Orange Park, possession-marijuana, attempting to flee/elude with lights/siren active

Frankie R. Wheeler, 55, Middleburg, shoplifting

Rasheed N. Najim, 21, Orange Park, armed carjacking, battery on law enforcement/firefighter/EMT, aggravated battery, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement.

### Saturday, Nov. 11

Clinton R. Helmer, 39, Keystone Heights, breach of peace/disorderly conduct/fighting/brawling

Sherissa L. Worthington, 30, Orange Park, DUI with BAL of .15 or higher

Ryan M. Rogers, 35, Orange Park, DUI, refusal to submit to BAL test

Melody N. Allen, 32, Green Cove Springs, possession-molly/ecstasy

Ayesha A.A. Ali, 25, Green Cove Springs, DUI with BAL of .15 or higher

Colleen L.L. Kelly, 57, Middleburg, DUI

### Friday, Nov. 10

Timothy L. Davis, 42, Green Cove Springs, non-support

Kalie N. Melvin, 19, Green Cove Springs, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Al'Asia D. Gregory, 21, Orange Park, uttering forged/counterfeit bill, illegally obtaining property

Justice B. Torrence, 19, Green Cove Springs, dating battery

Desean T. Johnson, 35, Orange Park, trespassing

Ashley N. Robinson, 35, Orange Park, illegally obtaining property, possession-controlled substance

Merel W. Unger, 37, Orange Park, grand theft auto

### Thursday, Nov. 9

Jessica L. Blair, 37, Middleburg, DUI

Cortney R. Madison, 35, Orange Park, DWLSR

Tyler J. Manuel, 21, Orange Park, aggravated domestic battery with deadly weapon

Christopher Cam, 31, Green Cove Springs, FTA-battery on law enforcement/firefighter/EMT, FTA-resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Cara T. Semper, 32 Middleburg, domestic battery

Curtis L. Henderson, 57, Orange Park, petit theft

Travis L. Hilliard, 31, Green Cove Springs, non-support

Felicia M. Bowen, 38, Green Cove

Springs, non-support

James R. Greenwood, 58, Orange Park, failure to register as sexual predator, failure to report vacating permanent resident as sexual predator

Joseph P. Kane, 41, Middleburg, trespassing

Dallin S. Cantonwine, 27, Middleburg, grand theft

John D. Guarino, 38, Green Cove Springs, violation of pretrial release conditions for protection against domestic battery

Caleb B. Stewart, 25, Keystone Heights, grand theft, possession-controlled substance, possession-drug paraphernalia, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Kevin L. Campbell, 24, Fleming Island, possession-marijuana, possession-drug paraphernalia, DUI

### Wednesday, Nov. 8

Quinteen R. Bellamy, 46, Orange Park, shoplifting

Elijah N. Robertson, 43, Orange Park, trespassing, giving false name/ID

Uber E. Hernandez-Torres, 48, Green Cove Springs, fugitive from justice

Daniel C. Westbrook, 36, Green Cove Springs, VOP-DWLSR, VOP-attempting to flee/elude law enforcement

Lakeisha N. Tillie, 42, Orange Park, aggravated battery

Shaniqua M. Ward, 33, Orange Park, assault during burglary

Beau D. Cook, 41, Green Cove Springs, VOP-contempt of court

Christopher T.J. Gilstrap, 23, Keystone Heights, burglary, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Charles L. Griffith, 24, Green Cove Springs, violation of jail rules

Shawn P. Riley, 56, Green Cove Springs, violation of jail rules

Pier T. Williams, 51, Orange Park, domestic battery

# Community Briefs

## Tickets for Wolfson Children's Hospital First Coast Design Show are available

JACKSONVILLE – The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital proudly announces tickets are available for purchase for the annual First Coast Design Show.

At the Prime Osborn Convention Center, the fundraising event benefitting Wolfson Children's Hospital is Dec. 1-3. The 2023 First Coast Design Show, "The Art of Gathering," honors the long-standing tradition of collecting and celebrates the relationships that are nurtured throughout the home. To purchase tickets, visit [FirstCoastDesignShow.com](http://FirstCoastDesignShow.com).

"We are excited to celebrate the art of gathering at the 2023 First Coast Design Show," said board president Kendra McCrary. "The art of gathering is about creating spaces that encourage relationships, community and joy. We hope everyone will join us and celebrate the relationships that are nurtured around the table and throughout the home when loved ones come together. Most importantly, the show supports our commitment to raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units (ICUs), part of Wolfson Children's Hospital's Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care Transport fleet, by 2024."

On Friday, Dec. 1, the First Coast Design Show will open in the morning with lectures by designers Angie Hranowsky and Melanie Turner. There will be a flower workshop and a "Booth Crawl" with designer Juli Catlin. On Friday evening, the Opening Night Gala features dinner and dancing alongside curated antiques and art and garden dealers with entertainment by DJ Lucy Wrubel.

On Saturday, Dec. 2, lectures include designer and lifestyle expert Danielle Rollins and artist Aldous Bertram. There will be a table-setting experience and a cocktail demonstration.

On Sunday, Dec. 3, a "Bubbles and Booth Crawl" with Stephanie Jarvis will be followed by the signature grand finale event, the Children's Fashion Show, featuring more than 30 models who are current or former Wolfson Children's Hospital patients. In collaboration with the Cummer Museum, the Children's Fashion Show honors the inspiration of fashion and self-expression with the theme, "Dress to

Inspire with the Cummer Museum." Dillard's, a longtime sponsor, will provide the clothing to light up the runway. A reception will take place immediately following the Children's Fashion Show.

Show hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 1, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 2-3. General show admission is \$15 and features antiques, art and garden dealers from around the southeast. Enjoy lunch at the Tea Room or an afternoon coffee and treat at the Pastry Café. The show also presents a gallery wall of local art that is available for purchase, with 50% of the proceeds going directly to the 2023 Kids Kare Mobile ICU Funding Target.

The Opening Night Gala, lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and the children's fashion show are ticketed events and ticket quantity is limited. Opening Night Gala tickets start at \$150 for Young Collector tickets and \$250 for Patron tickets. Lectures are \$30 each, and the cost of immersive experiences varies. Book signings will occur at the end of each lecture. Tickets to the Children's Fashion Show are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students with free admission for children under age 6.

For sponsorship and ticket information, visit [www.firstcoastdesignshow.com](http://www.firstcoastdesignshow.com), call 904.202.2886, or email [womensboard@bmcjax.com](mailto:womensboard@bmcjax.com). Follow The Women's Board and the First Coast Design Show on social media at @firstcoastdesignshow, @thewomensboardwch and [www.facebook.com/womensboardwch](http://www.facebook.com/womensboardwch).

## Wake Up Santa! returns to Orange Park Mall

ORANGE PARK – The mall is gearing up to welcome Santa on Saturday, Nov. 18, starting at 11 a.m.

Families are encouraged to don their holiday pajamas and assist Santa's Elves in locating Santa to awaken him for the festive season. The day's activities feature Reindeer Pony Rides from Pinto Farms, a delightful hot cocoa station, meet-and-greet with Elsa, Anna and Kristoff, face painting and more.

For children with hidden disabilities like autism and sensory sensitivities, a visit with Santa can often be overwhelming. Sensitive Santa provides a magical experience hosted before the town center opens. Santa has received specialized training

was assessed by medical personnel due to appearing ill, not as a result of a use of force incident but with an apparent medical emergency. The efforts of Deputies and medical staff to revive him were unsuccessful.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement will review this case, and the Medical Examiner's Office has also accepted jurisdiction. The family was notified, and the Clay County Sheriff's Office expressed condolences.

## Police

from page 14

### CCSO: Man suffers 'medical emergency' and dies in jail

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County Sheriff's Office reported Jered Jerome Nichols, 44, who was arrested on Nov. 6 for simple battery and retail theft, died in the Clay County Jail on Nov. 13.

That morning, shortly after 11:30, he



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY CLAY COUNTY PAL

## Three cheers for Clay PAL Guardians' championship

ORANGE PARK – A week after winning the National Youth Football and Cheer Association title, the Clay County Police Athletic League 8-and-under Guardians cheerleading squad won the Diamond Cheer and Dance Fall Classic last Saturday at the Thrasher-Horne Center. The 12-and-under squad also won a week earlier at NYFCC, beating 21 other teams.

and adapts to each child's unique needs with guidance from parents and caregivers. Sensitive Santa will be on Sunday, Dec. 3 and Sunday, Dec. 10, from 10 a.m. to noon, featuring crafts with Mrs. Claus, a cereal bar and a special gift from Santa. Advance registration at [whereissanta.com/mall/](http://whereissanta.com/mall/) is required.

## Parents need to register for ChristmasShopFL discount sales

CLAY COUNTY – Parents can register for Christmas Shop to pick out and wrap toys.

Sites in Clay County include Jennings Elementary at 215 Corona Dr. in Orange Park, Keystone Heights Elementary at 335 S.W. Pecan St. and Wilkinson Junior High at 5025 County Road 218 in Middleburg.

The shopping event is by invitation only and hosted by schools, local churches and community partners. Its purpose is to help parents who need help with the cost of Christmas gifts for children through middle school ages. Discounts up to 70% will be available and there will be a separate area with special activities for children while their parents shop. Churches that wish to donate toys can call (812) 598-9014.

To register, visit [christmasshopfl.com](http://christmasshopfl.com).

## Children get in free at Museum of Science and History during November

JACKSONVILLE – The Museum of Science and History (MOSH) is once again participating in Visit Jacksonville's Kids Free November initiative. The effort encourages visitors and locals alike to bring the whole family to explore Jacksonville attractions this fall.

Throughout the month, guests can visit the museum at 1025 Museum Cir. and receive free admission for up to five children, ages 3-12, with the purchase of one adult admission. Kids Free November applies only to general admission to the Museum.

## Reservations needed for Clay High's Blue Devil Holiday Gala

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Clay High alumni and friends are asked to reserve a spot at this year's Blue Devil Holiday Gala on Dec. 14 at Vintage Oaks Events, 5960 Sweet Moody Road in Green Cove Springs.

The adults-only event features semi-formal attire, dinner and dessert dash to benefit ongoing improvement projects at the high school.

To make a reservation, visit Clay High School's Facebook page.



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STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

**Despite rain, hundreds attend Camp Blanding Veterans Day ceremonies**

CAMP BLANDING – The wings of an old Douglas C-47 Skytrain not only provided an historic backdrop during the Veterans Day ceremony at Camp Blanding, it also became good cover for anyone trying to stay dry during a typical Florida shower. Base commander Col. Jason M. Hunt told visitors, veterans and their families, “It’s a true honor to host this year’s Clay County Veterans Day event. We are so blessed to be in this amazing community, by far, the most veteran-friendly community in Florida.” Moments later, guests scrambled for cover from the rain. Vendor tents, especially the hot dog and hamburger stand, remained busy – especially with hamburgers being sold for 50 cents and hot dogs for a quarter. There were other military artifacts on display, including an extensive collection of diecast and model tanks. The event also brought attention to the camp’s museum, which was created in 1990 to put the camp’s history and involvement in World War II on display.

# Seagrass Village salutes 27 veteran residents

Event also pays tribute to 98th birthday for two-time Purple Heart recipient

By Lee Wardlaw  
lee@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – In a fitting salute to heroic veterans of Seagrass Village, the community gathered for a ceremony sponsored by Home Instead and Haven Hospice on the eve of Veterans Day.

Orange Park High Chorus sang the “Star Spangled Banner,” and the Fleming Island High NJROTC presented the patriotic colors. Then, Robin McKenzie, a retired Navy Nurse Corps captain who served for 30 years, introduced the assisted living facility’s 27 veterans.

Pins and certificates of appreciation from Haven Hospice were distributed to

each veteran, with Heidi Forsythe, Professional Liaison, reading each name. The Black Creek Young Marines then delivered each certificate with precise, military-style execution.

The Young Marines then paid a special tribute to Col. William “Bill” Sweeney, as the day was also his birthday. This two-time Purple Heart recipient joined the Marines when he was 16.

“This is not a coincidence. He is very (blessed) to have his birthday on the same day (Nov. 10) as the Marine Corps,” said Mindy Wood, Executive Officer with the Black Creek Young Marines.

Sweeney began his stint in 1952 as a private and retired in 1987, including the Korean and Vietnam wars. Sweeney only retired from the service for two reasons, he said: his wife’s advice and the prospect



STAFF PHOTOS BY LEE WARDLAW

The Black Creek Young Marines proudly distributed certificates of appreciation to veterans of Seagrass Village, expressing their gratitude for their service. Mindy Wood, Executive Officer for the Black Creek Young Marines and retired Navy member who spent 3,500 hours aboard the P-3 Orion and seven tours of the Middle East, updated the community about the progress of her organization and thanked all veterans.



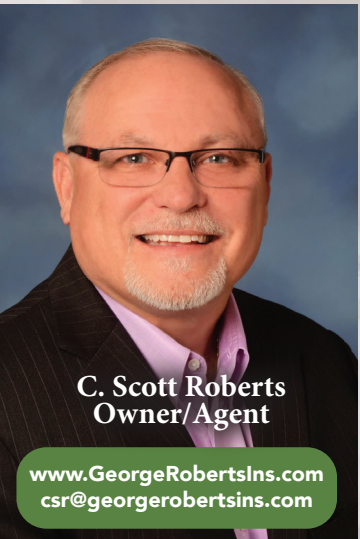
of another war.

“I thought the (event) was wonderful. Whoever put it together, they did a good job,” Sweeney said.

Sweeney still fondly talks about being a Marine.


“I loved leading my Marines. They were good warriors and great human beings. They did their job, and they paid the price,” he said.

Sweeney earned both Purple Hearts within a year apart from 1968. His first came from him jumping on a fellow soldier to extinguish a fire that was ignited by a booby trap. He was transported to a hospital in San Diego for his injuries. When he returned to Vietnam, a bullet blasted through his hand during hand-to-hand combat against a North Vietnamese soldier.



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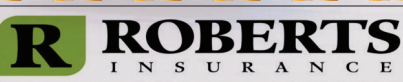


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## FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION STATE CHAMPIONS



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY NOAH WYATT

Middleburg High setter Olivia Callipo holds up the Class 5A championship trophy after her Broncos beat Barron Collier 3-0 in Winter Haven to secure the first volleyball state title.

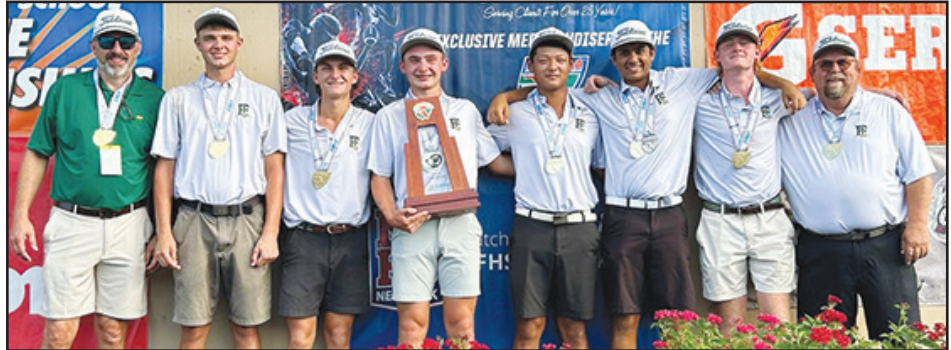
### Rahn-led Broncos take 5A volleyball state title

By Randy Lefko  
 Sports Editor

WINTER HAVEN - Everyone kind of figured that the Class 5A title game would feature three of the best hitters in Florida all patrolling above the net creating fireworks and drama, but it was Middleburg High's three-man frontal attack; Connor Rahn

(2nd in 5A, 425 Kills), Brooke Forkum (4th in 5A, 373 Kills) and Camden Rahn (three double-digit kill games in playoffs), that neutralized the threat and gave first-year head coach Meredith Forkum the Class 5A title over Barron Collier High out of Naples Thursday afternoon in Winter Haven.

SEE VOLLEYBALL, 22



Fleming Islands boys golf team shows off their Class 3A championship trophy with individual gold medalist Tyler Mawhinney holding trophy.

### Mawhinney rocks 3A state golf title

By Randy Lefko  
 Sports Editor

HOWEY IN THE HILLS - Behind a sizzling first round at the Mission Inn Resort Golf Course, Fleming Island sophomore Tyler Mawhinney had a hole-in-one and an eagle enroute of a first-round 4-under-par 68. He fired an even-par 72 on Saturday to win the individual title by three shots and lead the Golden Eagles to its first team championship.

"I think we are the only Clay County team to ever win a state golf team championship with the Middleburg guy (Cody Carroll) the last individual champion a few years ago," said Fleming Island golf coach Bruce Cloud, noting Mawhinney was seventh last year as a sophomore in a one round championship (73) due to weather. "To say this was a challenging finish of the season is an understatement, but the boys got their heads right and played a great weekend of golf."

Along with the Fleming Island boys, the Fleming Island girls golf team improved



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Fleming Island sophomore golfer Tyler Mawhinney scored the top score in the Class 3A golf championship tournament in round one then held his lead to win the individual title as well as lead the Golden Eagles' boys team to a first school and Clay County title.

from 12th last year to sixth behind team champion Lake Mary, the defending 3A champions, with seniors Cambree Hodge and Kalia Polete scoring the top two finishes; Hodge 16th with a 152 total (75, 77), Polete 34th with a 158 total (80, 78). Fleming Island's finish is impressive as top golfer Alyzbeth Morgan (second state finisher last year tied with Hodge at 62nd behind Polete at 46th) missed the entire season with knee

SEE GOLF, 23

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# McDade lands third title, elusive 100

Brinkman; second by 0.95

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

OCALA - Fleming Island High senior swim freestyle specialist and twice the Class 3A 50 free champion Maryn McDade did what she does in her event with a dominating post-season culminating in an astounding third 50 free title, but, more interesting, was her journey to capture the swim double with the elusive 100 free title up for grabs just a few minutes later.

"I had about 15-20 minutes between the finals of the 50 and the 100, just the 100 butterfly between the two finals," said McDade, who recently signed her letter of intent to continue her swimming at Florida State University. "I hit a 22.99 in the prelims and swam almost a perfect race, but my finals were not good."

Not good, but good enough for the gold medal and a third title.

"I missed on my flip turn," said McDade. "I just did not panic and put my head down to get back in the game. There was a lot of pressure for the third title, but not as much direct competition."

McDade's main rival, Ponte Vedra's Penelope Zarczynski, had chosen to compete in the 200 free (Fourth).

"She swam well, but I wished she was next to me because she was my biggest competition," said McDade. "Now the 100, that was a different story."

In the 50 free final, McDade won with a 23.18-second split with Maya Golubovic of Seminole High and a Texas A&M commit, second at 23.31 and Ponte Vedra sophomore Sophie Fox third at 23.44.

"With the 100 just minutes to start, I was dead after the 50," said McDade. "I had to really reach in to get through the 100."

In the 100, there is a little leeway as far as little mistakes along the way said McDade, but her strategy was to take the first 50 super fast and hold on.

"I have to take it out fast or I won't have a chance," said McDade. "I'm serious, that last 25, I could not feel my arms or legs."



In the 100, where McDade was second in district to Nease junior Olivia Moore, McDade had competition on both sides of her for the final 50 with Golubovic and Moore in her peripheral.

"I could see them on both sides and they were right there," said McDade. "My first 50 in the 100 was about a 23 and when I turned, I saw that they were both right there. I just said to myself, 'Put your head down and go'. I normally take a breath every stroke in the 100 which is not optimum, but I had to to win that one."

In the 100, McDade won in 50.49 with a 23.98 opening 50 with Golubovic second in 50.64 with an opening 50 in 24.29 and



Orange Park High School freestyle swimmer and breaststroke swimmer Sebastian Lopez had some fast times in his first visit to the class 3A championship swim meet.



Fleming Island senior freestyle swimmer Maryn McDade shows off her two gold medals; one for the 50 free and one for the 100 free; after the FHSAA class 3A swimming and diving championships in Ocala on Saturday. McDade is now a three-time 50 free state champ and 100 freeway was her first gold medal in that event.



Fleming Island Junior diver Ava Brinkman shows off some spins and moves en route to her silver metal finish at the class 3A swimming and diving championships in Ocala. Brinkman was the defending 3A champion and lost by 0.95 points to earn her silver medal.



Moore third at 50.93 with a 24.45 opening 50. In the diving competition, where Fleming Island junior Ava Brinkman was the defending 3A champion, the final tally came down to the tuck of a chin as Brinkman finished second by just 0.95 points; 483.60-482.65, in one of the tightest diving competitions in Florida history.

"I think it came down to the last dive and me not tucking my chin before my entry," said Brinkman. "By not doing that, it made my entry long and the judges caught it."

Brinkman finished second to Hadley Futch of Winter Springs, a long-time rival, with Sadie Dempz of Viera High third at a distant 442.75. Fleming Island also had freshman Carolina Croce in the diving competition with an 11th-place finish with 329.75 points. Ironically, as a freshman, Brinkman had a record-setting district championship effort and was thought to be a lock for a state title in her first foray, but a season-ending injury did not allow her to compete at that regionals. As a sophomore, she recovered from injury to win the gold

medal. Also in the 3A championship meet, Fleming Island distance swimmer Elizabeth Loehse, a sophomore, finished 10th in the 500 free (5:09.89, winner at 4:54.27) and 11th in the 200 free (1:55.85, winner at 1:49.10) with freshman William Shoemith finishing a strong seventh in the 500 free in 4:45.03 with the winner's time at 4:19.89 (Ethan Ekk, a junior at Chiles). Shoemith was 12th in the 200 in 1:44.54 with the winner at 1:36.72.

Fleming Island's girl's relays got an eighth in the 200 free relay and

For Oakleaf, senior Peyton Loving was 20th in the 50 free in 25.62 and 14th in the 100 breaststroke in 1:08.43.

For Orange Park, Sebastian Lopez finished 16th in the 100 breast in 1:01.36 and 12th in the 100 free in a very fast 47.79 with the winner at 45.29.

"Class 3A is the fastest class in the state," said Orange Park coach Susan Johnson. "Sebastian dropped seconds in both events and hit a 21.8 split for the leadoff leg of our relay."

# FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

## Spartans runners add to string of state appearances

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

JACKSONVILLE - The St. Johns Country Day School cross country program; both boys and girls, has had a historic trend of annual visits to the FHSAA Class 1A championship races under long-time coach Jay Birmingham and now under present coach Greg Stratton with nearly two decades of bus rides to Tallahassee and beyond.

"I think Jay Birmingham had 12 in a row with his girls teams," said Stratton, who started six years ago after Birmingham headed to the mountains of North Carolina. "We had six in a row until last year with the boys. The girls had 13 in a row under coach Jay, then we broke the streak for the last two years and went last year. Maybe we started another streak."

At the region 1-1A championships, held Friday at the New World Golf Course in Cecil Field, Stratton got sterling performances from his girls' team, led by junior daughter Rebecca Stratton, but strengthened by the extraordinary run of seventh grader Kate Staten.

"She's very humble like when she won a



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

St. Johns Country Day School Kate Staten, just a seventh grader regains her breath after a splendid third-place team finish at the Region 1-1A championships held Friday in Jacksonville. Staten and the Spartan girls and boys cross country teams both advanced to the Class 1A championship race in Tallahassee on Friday.



St John's Country Day School girls cross country team takes off at the region 1-1a championships held in Jacksonville on Friday. St John's girls finish fourth with the boys finishing seventh to earn a trip to Tallahassee on Friday for the Class 1A championship race.

local 5K and never told me and I read it in the Clay Today," said Stratton. "I remember when Matthew was just a seventh grader and he was here running for coach Birmingham and coach telling him not to think about the high school kids around him, but to run his race."

Staten was very complimentary of her teammates when talking about her season.

"I have some great memories already with my teammates," said Staten, who competed as a sixth grader on the St. Johns state team last year. "I was at a 24:26 best time, but now I'm near the 21-minute mark. This is probably my best race of the season."

Stratton mention of son Matthew Stratton, a cross country state champion as a senior now at the University of Florida, in

relationship to Staten seemed appropriate as the tiny Staten finished right behind junior teammate Kaitlyn Sunderhaus; 23rd and 24th, to give the Lady Spartans a solid fourth place team finish.

Up front, powerhouses Tallahassee Maclay and Pensacola Christian were duking it out; Maclay sophomore Carolina Couch winning in 18:16.20 and Pensacola putting the next five runners in for a dominating team title, 20-52. Providence finished third at 80 with St. Johns fourth at 130.

For the boys, St. Johns senior Richard Nichols, who while complimenting his underclass teammates; three sophomores, a freshman, and an eighth grader, for a strong season effort, got word that his strong 19th place finish in 17:44.60 and

SEE SPARTANS, 25

# FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

## Scott's finish punches Fleming Island state ticket

Campbell's sprint seals boys title

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

MATANZAS - Fleming Island High's boys and girls cross country teams both showcase quality team depth with a team title and a runner-up finish at the region 1-3A cross country championships coming from names not normally in the sports page headlines.

"We have probably eight runners on both teams that can throw down a strong race," said Fleming Island coach Dave Allen, hoping to better a third-place finish in Class 3A last year. "Our top two guys; Graham Myers, and John Keester IV, did not have their best races, but Jacob Campbell came to run hard and to help the team and he delivered the winning points. We barely won today."

Myers and Keester finished side by side at sixth and seventh, with times well over their sub-16 minute expectations, with splits of 16:26.50 and 16:26.70.

"We just wanted to get the team title and get to state," said Myers, who will face

a double loop, hill-scattered Tallahassee trek next week in the Class 3A title race. "Teams like Naples run on very fast, flat courses so we'll see in Tallahassee."

Myers' comments may have been true as to the complacency of the course with overall champion Patrick Koon of Leon, the twice Class 3A champion with times in the 14:50 arena, cruised in 15:24.50 with runner-up Andrew Beroset of Gulf Breeze in at 15:47 as the lone two runners under 16 minutes.

Koon and Myers are destined to battle in Tallahassee with the pair teaming with Belen Jesuit's Joshua Ruiz last year for the top three spots in Class 3A; Koon the champ, Myers third; 14:56.50, 15:37.30 for Ruiz, 15:42.10 for Myers.

The finish for Campbell, though not very surprising as his presence has been on the bubble for a great race, pleased Allen.

"He has been a strong finisher for most of the season," said Allen. "Some days, you get a race or a course that is suited for your style and you have a great race. Our guys in 3-4-5 don't give up at the end and they passed a lot of guys at the end."

Campbell's finish, 12th in 16:42.40, but



Fleming Island girls cross country team finished second to Ponte Vedra in the Region 1-3A championship race held Saturday at Matanzas High School. Fleming Island's girls and boys team now advance to the Class 3A championship race in Tallahassee on Friday. A Fleming Island boys team won the region championship.

just behind two Leon finishers made the point-gathering shift slightly as Fleming Island's Roman Mollicone, the seasonal third finisher for Fleming Island, was just eight seconds behind with Andrew Boyer in at 17:06 ahead of Leon's final two finishers.

Fleming Island won with a 58-point team score with Leon at 65 and Ponte Vedra at 77.

In region 4-3A, defending Class 3A champion Belen Jesuit, led by Ruiz in 16:06.40 and his two siblings; Joseph and Justin, scored a cross-country shutout with the top six finishers (five for team points) in the region executing a 15-point win.

In region 3-3A, where Naples, 11th last year, and 3A runner-up Fort Myers compete, Naples dominated with 48 points over Fort Myers' 131 with five runners under 16 minutes; two from Fort Myers, one from Naples with Naples landing their top five runners in the top 20 finishers. Fort Myers had just three runners in the top 20.

"I think Naples is the team to beat," said Allen. "We will have to run way better than this race and even last week's district race to stay in the top three."

For the girls' region 3-3A race, Fleming Island was poised to make a run at the

SEE FLEMING, 20

# Broncos playoff dreams crushed in St. Augustine

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

ST. AUGUSTINE - Middleburg High football coach Ryan Wolfe has always said his team does not back down against his schedule and, despite a season-opening gauntlet that left the Broncos at 0-3, Wolfe and his team trudged through their season to earn a second region playoff spot in the past two years.

Unfortunately, Wolfe wound up facing off in his region playoff opener against juggernaut St. Augustine High, undefeated and very, very fast.

"This St. Augustine team will win the state title, no doubt," said Wolfe. "They are good in all aspects of the game."

The undefeated and No. 2 ranked (Behind Daytona Beach Mainland) in Class 3S Yellow Jackets (10-0) revved their engine from the first snap with an 80-yard scoring jaunt from running back Trenton Jones en route to a 52-14 running clock win Friday night in St. Augustine.

Middleburg (5-6) tried to retaliate with pocket quarterback Carson Stewart in the backfield and athlete Jaydan Jenkins being utilized from all angles on the field but got a Kaleb Robison punt on their first series to start St. Augustine at their own 40.

After one play, a button hook passes catch to the 46, St. Augustine again broke free with running back Devonte Lyons breaking for paydirt to up the score to 14-0 with 10 minutes still left in the first period.



Middleburg High defensive back Erick Fryer, right, picks up fumble in the end zone for score for Broncos in region loss to St Augustine. Left: Senior middle linebacker Austin Cruce walks off the field for a final time.

Both teams exchanged turnovers on the next series after Jenkins rambled 30 yards to put Middleburg into Yellow Jacket territory at their 30, but a St. Augustine pass interception halted the threat.

Middleburg defensive back Erick Fryer picked up a St. Augustine fumble to thread some life, but a punt ensued that Robison landed on the Yellow Jacket's five-yard line.

St. Augustine took just one handoff to be off to the end zone for a 95-yard scamper to put the score at 21-0 still in the first quarter.

St. Augustine would finish the half up 45-0.

"I told them to remember that they were one of the very few teams still playing in November," said Wolfe. "I told them, we're

down 45-0 at the half and we weren't going to change that. I wanted them to have a good time, smile and remember where they came from and where we are."

In the second half, with a running clock, Middleburg struck twice with linebacker Austin Cruce stealing a ball in a scrum and sprinting to the five-yard to set up a Land-on Nalepa scoring plunge, then, on the next series, Fryer scooped up a botched quarterback shotgun snap in the end zone for the Broncos' second score.

"Austin is the face of the program with his no quit," said Wolfe. "He's been the leader."

For Cruce, one of the top tacklers in the county the past two seasons, the growth of the program under his leadership will cer-

tainly be his legacy.

"I got out of wind on the fumble run," said Cruce with his Cowboy smile. "I thought maybe they keep the jayvee in, we rack up some quick points on them in the fourth quarter, but they were good."

Cruce commented that he got nearly 300 tackles in his three years, three rushing touchdowns and a bunch of hard tackles.

"After the Ribault game when they let me run the ball and I scored from 36 yards out, I kind of put the team on my shoulders and wanted us to get to the playoffs and finish as one of the playoff teams from the county," said Cruce. "I think whenever we needed a first down, I was first in line to take the ball."

## Fleming

from page 25

strong Ponte Vedra front running team who made quick work at the front with the top three finishers all in within 20 seconds making depth of the team the next factor for a top three finish.

"Our top three girls all stay pretty close together throughout the race and it's just a matter of who feels good in the final mile for the order of finish," said Allen. "Reese is coming on strong in her final season and that helped us today."

Scott, the third finisher for most of the season, has blasted to the second finisher with late-race strength to pass teammate Allie Knotts and also get closer to front-runner Brooke Reynolds. Knotts was second behind Reynolds at last week's district race.

"We have a bit of teammate competition when it comes to the races but we are all here to run our best for the team," said Scott. "I run a little behind everyone in the early part of the race and tend to pass more people at the end with my strength. Brooke has been having great races and if I get closer to her, our team scores will



Left: Fleming Island sophomore cross country runner Brook Reynolds made Sprint finish to push Golden eagle girls team to second place team finish in region 1-3a championship race on Saturday. Right: Fleming Island boys cross country team won the region title led by top 10 finishes from Graham Myers and John Keester IV. Fleming Islands boys team has a shot to repeat as a top five finisher at the Class 3A championship after finishing third last year in Tallahassee.

be stronger." With Ponte Vedra dominating the front running, Reynolds sprinted in just past Fort Walton Beach's Belicia Grady to take eighth place in 19:44.20 with Scott in at 13th in 20:17.50. Knotts had been running near to Reynolds for the first half of the race and finished 20th in 21:00.70.

"First mile, I just settled in, keep my pace," said Reynolds. "Our goal was to

work together to get to state."

Fleming Island notched ahead of Fort Myers with a 25th and 27th place tandem finish from Sydney Fallin and Marlea Feld.

Ponte Vedra won the team title at 23 points with Fleming Island second at 88 and Fort Walton Beach third at 107.

For individual athletes in both races, Clay had Kaygen Williamson and Erika

Martinez in at 28th and 30th, Ridgeview's Emily Turner was 40th and Orange Park's Charlotte Wilson was 53rd.

For the boys, Orange Park's Ty Obermeyer, who completed his football kicking season a week ago, finished his cross country season with a 34th place finish at regions with Clay's Noah Looney finishing 77th.

# Indians stung by Hornets

By Ray Dimonda  
Correspondent

YULEE - Traveling just south of the border, the Keystone Heights High's football Indians found the early sting of the Yulee High Hornets too much to bear. Even with holding the Hornets scoreless in the fourth quarter and racking up 10 points in the final stanza of the 2023 season, the Hornet swarm of 36 points in the first three quarters along with five Keystone turnovers was simply too much to overcome as the Indians would fall on the road, ending the playoff run at one game, 36-10.

"At this time of year, you have to accentuate your positives as much as possible," said first-year head coach Steve Reynolds. "We played to our strengths. There is no sense running a bunch of stuff you're not great at. That is a really good front (line) we went up against tonight. We've seen a few this year and that is one of them. The team made a few mistakes, and the coaches did as well. We'll do some things better next year. We got aggressive on a first-down call and that one (turnover) is on me. They did a good job. These kids put in the work this year and turned this around. I'm so proud of them."

With Reynolds taking over the helm from long-standing Keystone Heights legend Chuck Dickerson, the big shoes were a little snug at the beginning of the season before the right mix was introduced. Some standout stats were Reynolds' regular season winning record of 6-4, making the playoffs in year one, and quarterback Baylor Ford throwing for over 1,000 yards this season, a stat not reached in over a decade with Keystone Indian football.

"One thing you have to say is we have great kids... Great kids," said an emotional Reynolds. "These kids show up, and work hard, we see them all the time. They could have folded at 0-2 early this season, but they didn't. They went to work and got better. They are such great kids and again, I'm just so proud of them."

The Hornets went on offense, taking less than two minutes to drive the field and get a quick score on the board and two-point conversion, 8-0. After a third down



Left: Keystone Heights junior quarterback Baylor Ford took the Indians offense to an unprecedented new level with almost 1,000 yards passing with 11 touchdowns. Above: Defender Jayden Goodman, a senior, knocked out a good final campaign on defense with a region playoff spot for his final game.



CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS BY RAY DIMONDA

Keystone interception, it looked bleak for the Indians with Yulee on the Indian 25-yard line. Some tough inside play forced the ball out of the Yulee runner's hands with Keystone recovering. With a momentum shift, things were looking up for Keystone until another inside scrum, with all the players forcing a few more yards, the ball again was on the ground with Yulee recovering. With only 36 ticks until the end of the quarter, the Hornets notched another score. The Indians picked off a two-point conversion pass to hold the score to 14-0.

The second quarter didn't start well for the Indians with an intercepted pass. The resulting drive was another Hornet score and two-point conversion, 22-0. With good field position from the kick return on the 32, the Indians again threw an interception. Six plays later Yulee posted another touchdown at 4:14, 29-0. The Indians would hold off the Hornets through the half, including a picked-off pass during a Yulee fake punt just before the half.

After the half break, the Indians took the second-half kickoff and had a well-organized drive moving the ball for over 6:00 finding themselves on the Yulee 26-yard

line, but a sack of Baylor Ford stalled the attack. On a fourth down attempt, the long pass to Audru Seier was just outside of his stretch, turning the ball over on downs. The Hornets used nearly the rest of the quarter to methodically drive the field notching the final score at 1:31, 36-0.

The fourth quarter was all Indians as the team started a drive that fizzled out but had the punt of the season with the ball traveling half the field, taking a perfect Indian bounce, and downed at the one-yard line. With three downs and out, Yulee attempted the first punt which was blocked by several attacking Keystone players. With the ball out the back of the endzone for a safety, the Indians were on the board, 36-2 and a returning free kick.

The Yulee kick was returned to the 45 and set up a drive dominated by Cartez Daniels clipping off over five yards per carry. With a final carry to get the ball to the five-yard line, Daniels got dinged and had to step out. Colton Hollingsworth stepped in and carried the team the final five yards to score with 1:32 remaining in the game; just another sign of the team's never-give-

up attitude. The successful Hollingsworth two-point conversion put the final points on the board and closed the game, 36-10.

Reynolds finished with "Who else is going to do that? These kids are not going to give up. If there is time on the clock, they are ready to play ball." Reynolds will lose 20 seniors, making way for many starting roles to open next season. With 11 sophomores and 7 juniors returning, Keystone Football could be set for an exciting 2024 season.

Yulee moves on in Class 2S play to face Baker County at home, one of the two teams to put a loss on the Hornets during the regular season.

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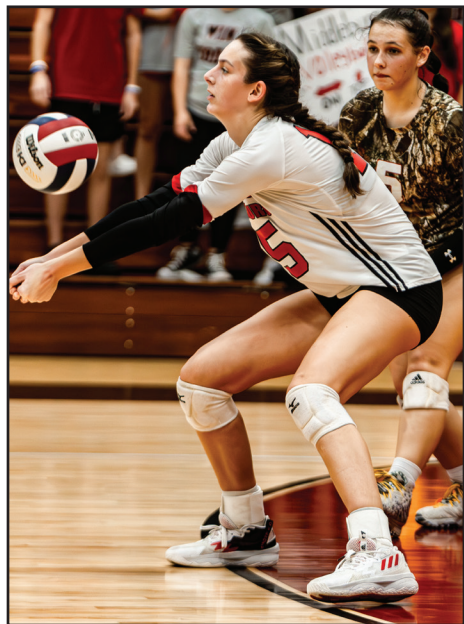
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CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS BY NOAH WYATT

Left: Middleburg senior Connor Rahn will be a candidate for best player in Florida after her outstanding final season with a state title and a top five hitter in the state finish. Center: Middleburg mobile fan base; filled with state champion softball players, was a key motivational aspect of the strong Bronco following. Right: Setter Olivia Callipo was dynamic at the net in orchestrating coach Meredith Forkum's three-pronged attack with Connor Rahn, Brooke Forkum and Camden Rahn all hitting double figure scores for the Final Four campaign.

## Volleyball

from page 17

Barron Collier, last year's runner-up to Jensen Beach, got the better of Jensen Beach in their semifinal to advance while Middleburg handled a game Merrit Island team, 3-1, to advance.

"We were well aware of their girl up-front; senior hitter Aisha Keric (3rd in 5A, 413 Kills), and that she would be formidable," said Bronco first-year head coach Meredith Forkum, who followed a 40-year career of mentor Carrie Prewitt on the Bronco sideline in getting that elusive title despite Prewitt's six trips to the Final Four with two championship runner-up finishes. "Our approach was to play our game, move the ball around quickly and try to defend her the best we could."

With her three-man wrecking crew up front delivering 25, 14 and 10 scoring bolts in the 3-0 win (25-23, 25-17, 25-23) Forkum's strategy proved fateful to Keric's game-leading 27 scoring kills. The difference was Barron Collier's second and third hitters only delivered four and three kills to supplement Keric's efforts.

"The key to our strategy was setter Olivia Callipo who was reading their defense and putting the ball in play to the best hitter in position," said Forkum, with assistants Kory Camp and Tony Valentin. "She had a great game at the net and Kate Lowery had a great game blocking or deterring much of Keric's attack."

Forkum's first season proved magnified by the aura of former coach Carrie Prewitt's contribution to the program's strong history.

"I got lucky with the right group of kids, a good schedule of matchups and a little luck," said Forkum. "Coach Prewitt set the standard but had some bad luck in some of her Final Fours (food poisoning in 2003 finals). I talked to Coach Prewitt and she was overjoyed. She told me she was at peace and happy for the whole team and where the program is going."

Forkum gave kudos to the Middleburg



Left: Middleburg High alum Meredith Forkum did about as much as a first year coach could do with a brilliant season long strategy of tough scheduling and strong conditioning with a bit of fun along the way. Right: Brooke Forkum's strong left handed strikes kept opposing defense on their heels awaiting the switches between her and right-handed Connor Rahn.

softball team that had followed the volleyball team throughout the journey.

"They were like our biggest fans," said Forkum. "Ashley (Houston, softball coach, first team state title for Middleburg) knows the value of a team spirit and her girls were awesome."

Against Merritt Island, won 25-20, 25-17, 16-25 and 25-20, Forkum got some bench inspiration help from sophomore libero Morgan Padgett who noticed the team's face were a little mopey after the third game loss.

"Morgan, who has played lights out the second half of the season, noticed and said something that they were not smiling and having fun out there," said Forkum. "Sometimes the team tends to think too much about the game at hand and the fun of it all gets away from them. She made a pretty good statement about it and the team responded. I just let it happen because I could not have said it better."

After their third game loss, 25-16, Middleburg responded with a 25-20 final game to propel themselves into the final.

Rahn led the attack with 15 kills, but Forkum was equally formidable with 14 kills on her left hand. Camden Rahn added seven.

"Merrit Island was the hardest serving



team we have ever seen," said Forkum. "We had a little trouble getting the ball to the net, but we figured it out."

Barron Collier, 26-7, got up by as much as 17-13 in game one to put a slight pause in the Bronco enthusiasm, but a double-edged sword of attack from Padgett serves and two blocks from Callipo flipped the momentum to Middleburg and the game got tied at 20-20 before a huge block by Camden Rahn ignited a five-point winning swing to 25-23 with Forkum delivering the final blow.

"They were staying close to us in all three games and we just had to settle down after that game one to get into our game," said Forkum. "We got to a point where we were just tipping the ball and I told them we need to start swinging away."

In the second game, Barron Collier kept pushing Keric to the net, but it was laser-like serves from Kendyl Wahl that backed up the Barron Collier defense and kept Keric a foot or two away from her spot at the net.

"Kendyl has been our momentum shift most of the season with her serves to control the pace of the game," said Forkum. "Because their girl was six foot tall, she would have had more strikes if she was closer to the net. Kendyl's serves forced

them to set up a foot or two off her mark and we had the defense set up waiting for her."

With Middleburg holding a two-point edge most of the game; at least to a 14-14 tie, Connor Rahn took over the domination end of the Bronco attack with a seven scores in 10-point swing from above the net.

"Hey, she's the top hitter out there and she wanted to assert herself," said Forkum. "I think she took the signing for a scholarship the night before (to the University of Tampa) as a big proving point for her game."

Rahn's A-10-like scorching of Barron Collier's defense pushed the game to a 25-17 win. In game three, Rahn opened with a massive swing to open up the contest then Middleburg shifted to Camden Rahn getting shots on the opposite end of the net to put the Broncos up 14-9 and cause Barron Collier to take a time-out and catch their breath.

"I had to settle them in to finish the game and not look ahead to the celebration," said Forkum. "I don't think they wanted to play a fourth game, but we still had to finish."

Barron Collier got as close as 23-22 and caused some heartburn for Forkum, but the match ended 25-23.

# Golf

from page 17

injury rehabilitation from an injury suffered at last year's state tournament.

"The girls told themselves that Alyza-beth was not going to be able to join the team this year and I think they took it upon themselves to practice with a little more



Dylan Frein is top returner for Fleming Island with strong season play in 2023.



Fleming Island golfer Chloe Blanc swings away while an alligator in lake behind her looks on.

diligence to get back to state," said Fleming Island girls golf coach Brian Nedrich. "We were two or three putts per girls away from a solid top three finish out there, but that course is very tough."

Kathleen High junior Darby Hancock (7th last year) won with a 141 total ahead of Buchholz' Braydn Smith, last year's runner-up, who finished at 144. Lake Mary totaled 600 to Doral Academy at 653 (5th last year) and Niceville at 655 (2nd last year). Fleming Island, 12th last year, finished at 666.

"Everyone knew Lake Mary was lights out the best team out there and we were all shooting for second place," said Nedrich.

In the boys tournament run up, Cloud's reference to a challenging finish was that his team nearly did not qualify to even arrive in Howey in the Hills as they finished a disturbing third in their region tournament.

"We finished as undefeated in stroke play for the regular season, a strong district championship tournament, then a disastrous region finish," said Cloud. "We got the at-large bid to come here probably because



Fleming Island senior Jaylen Abbas, left, here with Ben Carlton, will be lone non-returner for Golden Eagles state title team that could repeat with the rest of the team underclassmen.



Fleming Island's girls golf team, with coach Brian Nedrich, left, improved from 12th to sixth in Class 3A behind seniors Kalia Polete, Cambree Hodge, Chloe Blanc, Shayla Abbas and Kathryn McNeil all having outstanding performances in post season play including a second place region finish against eventual Class 3A champion Lake Mary.

of our regular season finish and record finish at districts, but talk about stress."

Adding to Cloud's stress level before the tournament event started was a flu attack on golfer Dylan Frein.

"He was just not feeling right and we figured a flu, we pulled him and he was very gracious about it, not being at full strength, and sophomore Carson Moore stepped in and did a nice job," said Cloud. "Dylan did what was best for the team and it may have put the other guys on notice to up their game a bit."

For Mawhinney, who has been the top striker for Cloud for most of the season, round one was about as good a round as a state championship round could get.

"The first nine holes of the Campeon course are very difficult and he opened with four pars and a double bogie," said Cloud. "He stayed calm like he does, made some adjustments then hit three more pars and a birdie to finish just one over (36, par 72 course). From there, he was on fire."

Mawhinney regrouped with his eagle three on a par five 10th hole; 562 yards, a bogie and par, then two birdies; 335 and 524 yard holes, before spinning in a hole in one on a par three 139 yarder.

"I knew what I had to do and my dad; assistant coach Joey Mawhinney, kept telling me to stay calm and play my game," said

Mawhinney. "The second nine of the course was a little easier than the first nine. My driver is the key to my end game."

Mawhinney finished with three pars to close at 68 and lead the field with a first nine of 36 and a second nine at 32.

Mawhinney's two main challengers, junior Anthony Monteleone of Winter Haven (45th last year) and junior Parker Severs of Lakewood Ranch (seventh last year), both second at 143 to Mawhinney's winning 140 total (68, 72), could not keep pace with Mawhinney's total game with Severs rolling through a 33 first nine holes, but going par for a 70 off the final nine holes to finish at 70 (2-under par).

Severs momentarily took the tournament lead over Mawhinney in round two, but went 36 (three bogies) and 37 (two bogies) for a 73 (1-over) final round.

"I was in one of the last groups to go out and all the golfers in front of me were making their moves to catch up," said Mawhinney. "I just wanted to play my game, make pars and let them chase me. I knew the second half was going to be where I could get back in the lead. I had some trouble on four (bogie), but kept playing par and got three birdies to finish."

Monteleone opened with a 34, 36 combo in round one with four bogies and seven birdies to stay within two strokes of

## FLEMING ISLAND GIRLS ROSTER

1. Cambree Hodge, Sr., 152
2. Kalia Polete, Sr., 158
3. Chloe Blanc, Jr., 175
4. Shayla Abbas, Fr., 181
5. Kathryn McNeill, Jr., 182

## FLEMING ISLAND BOYS ROSTER

1. Tyler Mawhinney, Soph., 140
2. Jaylen Abbas, Sr., 145
3. Emmet Kuhlenkamp, Jr., 146
4. Ryan Houck, Soph., 152
5. Carson Moore, Soph., 160

## 2A BOYS CHAMPIONSHIPS

1. Ponte Vedra 610
2. Beachside 617
3. American Heritage (Broward) 622

**INDIVIDUAL:** Brock Buhnerkemper  
OPHS 68th: 167 (85, 82)

## 2A GIRLS CHAMPIONSHIPS

1. Beachside 600
2. American Heritage (Broward) 603
3. Ponte Vedra 636



**INDIVIDUAL:** Neva Winslow MHS  
66th: 178 (90, 88)

Mawhinney, but round two saw Monteleone crumble in the first nine with three bogies and a disastrous double bogie to a 39. Monteleone recovered with three birdies and pars to finish, but Mawhinney stayed focus with two birdies, six pars and one bogie.

"We had a substantial lead in the team scores and I told the team to stay with pars for the win," said Cloud. "We didn't need to risk shots for birdies and we wanted the team title. Tyler was going to do Tyler and finish strong which he did."

Behind Mawhinney, also having astounding rounds of golf to supplement Mawhinney's front running pace were senior Jaylen Abbas at fourth in a tie with a 145 (75, 70) total and junior Emmet Kuhlenkamp in sixth at 146 (74, 72). "All of these guys were talking before the season that they were going to win the state title and do what it takes to get there," said Cloud. "For the whole season, they kind of watched out for each other and got on to each other when the intensity went down. If one of them missed a practice, he got the talk about letting the team down. I was pretty lucky to have a strong team; mentally tough and focused."

The rest of the scoring came from Ryan Houck, a sophomore, with a 152 total and Moore at 160.



**Weightlifting action**

Oakleaf and Clay high girls duked it out in regular season match with the Lady Knights taking a 96-84 win on Thursday. Pictured above is Emma Heck defending state champion for Clay and and De'Jean Mote for Oakleaf.



**Dreadnaughts keep winning**

The Fleming Island Dreadnaughts Pop Warner football 10-Unders are one step from a national tournament bid after a 38-0 win over Oceanway on Saturday at Bolles. The Dreadnaughts, coached by Mike Kenny, above in blue, will play the Soul Runners of South Georgia on Saturday in region championship to advance to national tournament in Orlando.



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# Spartans

from page 19

some effort behind him got the Spartan boys a seventh place finish ahead of Blounstown High and their ticket to Tallahassee. Pensacola Christiand and Providence battled to a 41-42 first-second finish with Maclay third with 82. "Wow, that was emotional," said a relieved Nichols, learning of St. Johns' 217 points for seventh place. "These guys have worked hard all season and I knew if I had a strong race, got some up front points, they would need to give me their best efforts to

get us to Tallahassee. I always believed in them and they delivered."

Behind Nichols were sophomores Wyatt Hollingsworth and Arlo Kistner in 45th and 48th, eighth grader Marcus Giles in 58th, and sophomore Griffin Dubnansky in 62nd.

"Not everyone knows that cross country is a team game," said Nichols. "I tried to be the captain that these young guys needed to keep getting better against stronger competition."

Stratton reminded his boys that the region race the next race and the final two races for them.

"We didn't have much room for error



Two senior runners for St. Johns Country Day School, Sofia Conde, left, and Richard Nichols, both have a handful of state meet runs under them with one final trek on Friday in Tallahassee.

with the boys and I had talked with Wyatt, has not had one before this region race. He a heart-to-heart," said Stratton. "I told him had that breakout race today." he had the breakout season last year, but

## LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Clay County Board of Adjustment will hold a public hearing on Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 6:00 P.M., in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, 4th Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida, for the purpose of hearing objections, if any, to issuing a Variance to the Clay County Land Development Code, Article III, Section 3-13(b)(4) to allow for the placement of an accessory structure for a private car collection in excess of three thousand (3,000) square feet of gross floor area in a parcel in the AR zoning district.

### **Location Address for BOA-1023-0020**

4940 Barkwood Lane

Tax Parcel Identification Number 33-05-24-006744-002-03

Interested parties may appear at the hearing and be heard with respect to the proposed Variance. If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such hearing, such person will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, such person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. A copy of the Variance Application is available for inspection by the public at the County Economic Development Services Department, Planning and Zoning Division, Third Floor of the Administration Building, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing accommodations to participate in this matter should contact Clay County Risk Management by mail at P.O. Box 1366, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, or by telephone at (904) 278-4718, no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing or proceeding for which this notice has been given. Deaf and hard of hearing persons can access the telephone number by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (Voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

BOA-1023-0020 published November 16, 2023 in Clay Today.

Clay County Board of Adjustment  
Keith Hadden  
Chairman

Legal 92135 published November 16, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The City of Green Cove Springs proposes to adopt the following Ordinance:

### **ORDINANCE NO. O-36-2023**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 117, SEC 117-656 GATEWAY CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES OF THE CITY CODE TO ALLOW FOR PARKING TO BE LOCATED BETWEEN THE STREET FRONT AND BUILDING LOCATION SUBJECT TO THE INSTALLATION OF A STREET WALL; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND SETTING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

The following public hearings have been scheduled and will be held in the City Council Chambers, 321 Walnut Street, Green Cove Springs, to hear comments, if any, regarding said Ordinance:

- Planning and Zoning: Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter;
- City Council: Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter;
- City Council: Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter;

Please be advised that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Council with respect to any matter considered at these scheduled public hearings, they will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in this matter should contact City Hall at (904) 297-7500 at least three (3) days prior to the meeting. Hearing impaired persons may access through Florida Relay – Dial 7-1-1.

Said Ordinance is available at City Hall for review during the hours of 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Thursday.

All interested individuals are invited to attend this public hearing.

City of Green Cove Springs  
Lyndie Knowles, Development Service Representative  
321 Walnut Street  
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043  
Steve Kennedy, City Manager

Legal 92142 published November 16 & 23, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.

#GIVINGTUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 28, 2023



# PAGES OF GENEROSITY

**GIVE THE GIFT OF READING**

As we approach Giving Tuesday, we're thrilled to introduce our "Pages of Generosity" campaign - a heartwarming initiative that promises to make a lasting impact on young readers.

For every \$60+ donation made to WJCT Public Media on Giving Tuesday, we're committed to providing a book to a deserving child in need. Your generous contribution not only supports our mission to enrich our community through quality programming but also ensures that a child discovers the joy and wonder within the pages of a book. Help us share the gift of reading this holiday season.

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[WJCT.ORG/GIVINGTUESDAY](http://WJCT.ORG/GIVINGTUESDAY)



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### Clay volleyball signees

Clay High volleyball signed off two athletes with Chantal Esparza, left, signing to play next at NCAA Div. III Emmanuel University in Georgia and Aubri Martin set to play at NCAA Div. I Mercer University in Georgia.



Middleburg High softball pitcher Morgan Beckham signs her letter of intent to continue playing at NCAA Div. I Bowling Green University in Ohio.



Fleming Island wrestler Kaden Schaefer, left, and lacrosse player Chloe Perry both finish signing letters of intent to play college sports at NCAA Div. I Bucknell University in Pennsylvania and NCAA Div. II St. Leo's University in Florida.



Middleburg High volleyball hitter Connor Rahn, seated, finished off a Class 5A title run with a signing of a letter of intent to NCAA Div. I University of Tampa.

# PUZZLE FUN

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		3						
	2			7	1			6
		9			2			7
8		4					2	

Level: Intermediate



Fleming Island track and cross country runner Graham Myers, with coach Chris Otero, signed his letter of intent to run at the University of Florida.

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## CRYPTO FUN

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Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to the library.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 17 = O)

**A. 21 18 21 8 18 15**

Clue: Part of a group or club

**B. 8 17 17 19 26**

Clue: Bound volumes

**C. 3 22 26 9 18 26**

Clue: Passages between rows

**D. 8 17 15 15 17 25**

Clue: Temporarily use

Answers: A. member B. books C. aisles D. borrow

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to the library.

**SRHCRAEE**

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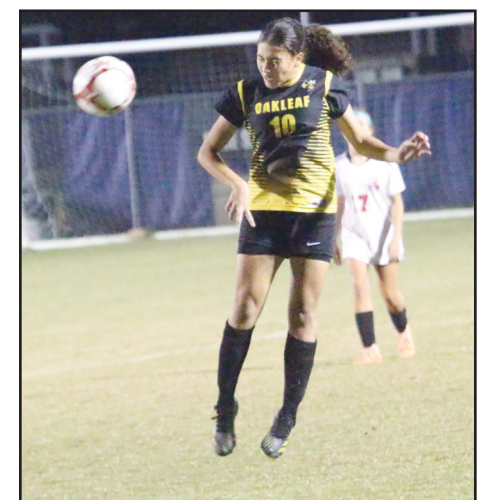
Answer: Research

## Guess Who?

I am a singer born California on February 17, 1972. I wrote my first song when I was five years old, and met my first bandmate in school. My anti-war album won a Grammy and six other music awards.

Answer: Billie Joe Armstrong

## Junior High Soccer action



## LIBRARY LEARNING WORD SEARCH

J Y T O J O U R N A L B R O W S E R W N  
 M K D T P N A V E E S H A G D D B A I L A C I T E B A H P L A N  
 K J F O L I O H L O R C H Y U K C  
 A Z L N T V J W L S N Y I Y U M Z  
 L I O D H L O R C H Y U K C  
 F O L I O H L O R C H Y U K C  
 X R M N L W T N F A R U O A A R  
 B O B U J K A O S R M Z S Z L N C  
 A C N E C T I T G X E D N I L L U  
 R Z H D O T E O M G N U B U N R L  
 C Z C S G N C S I C N A W G B E U I A  
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 I G D A D B B U D R R O F W N M B C I  
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 S H A G N B B U F Y W S R H H O L D I  
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 P Y O N L Z B V B R L Y Y X S A N E O  
 O T J S F O I Z O W T J J G Z B N A I  
 C T K D R E C N E R E F E R M G U U T  
 F T E R Z R F J E Z T C D J V P V B I  
 B O O N P H G V T S S K O O B X Z H D  
 W W D Z H J R Y P Y C I T A T I O N E

## WORDS

- ALMANAC
- ALPHABETICAL
- ANNOTATION
- ARCHIVES
- BARCODE
- BIBLIOGRAPHY
- BINDING
- BOOKS
- BORROW
- BROWSER
- CALL NUMBER
- CIRCULATION
- CITATION
- DATABASE
- DICTIONARY
- EDITION
- FOLIO
- HOLD
- INDEX
- JOURNAL
- LIBRARIAN
- MAGAZINES
- REFERENCE
- TEXT

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

S	T	E	T		U	S	A	B	L	E		
T	I	M	E		N	O	N	P	A	R	E	I
A	R	E	S		A	I		S	A	B	L	E
P	A	R	T	I	C	U	L	A	T	E	S	L
E	D	G	I	N	G		I	R	I	S	T	I
S	E	E	S		K	N	A	P	T	A	C	H
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D	A	F	T		T	A	O	S		T	O	M
D	D	T		P	A	R	S		C	H	A	P
E	D		H	A	B	I	T	A	B	I	L	I
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			S	A	L	I	N	E		T	E	S

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1	5	7	8	3	4	9	6	2
2	4	6	7	5	9	1	8	3
9	8	3	1	2	6	7	4	5
3	2	5	4	7	1	8	9	6
6	1	9	3	8	2	4	5	7
8	7	4	9	6	5	3	2	1





CLAY COUNTY LEGAL NOTICES

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:** RAJENDRA INC., the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
**Certificate No.:** 3412/2020  
**Legal Description:** N 100' OF LOTS 12 BLK 17 ISLAND VIEW AS REC O R 1787 PG 1604  
**Parcel ID No.:** 400326-018442-015-01  
**Opening Bid Amount:** \$1,412.38  
**Physical Address:** NAVARRA AVE , ORANGE PARK  
**Classification:** VACANT RESIDENTIAL  
**Name in which assessed:** DAVID C FIELDS/PC EL AL, FLOYD C FIELDS, JEAN R FIELDS  
 Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida.  
 Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the **13th day of December, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com.**  
**Dated this 23rd day of October, 2023**  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clay County Clerk & Comptroller  
 Clay County, Florida  
 By: Christina Spadea  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89785 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:** RAJENDRA INC., the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
**Certificate No.:** 2/2021  
**Legal Description:** LOT 11 & 12 BLK 33 LAKE GENEVA AS REC O R 722 PG 324; 1510 PG 1072 & 1603 PG 98 EX PT REC O R 1590 PG 1912  
**Parcel ID No.:** 280323-021917-001-00  
**Opening Bid Amount:** \$1,750.90  
**Physical Address:** CYPRESS ST , KEYSTONE HEIGHTS  
**Classification:** VACANT RESIDENTIAL  
**Name in which assessed:** RICKEY MOSLEY  
 Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida.  
 Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the **13th day of December, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com.**  
**Dated this 23rd day of October, 2023**  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clay County Clerk & Comptroller  
 Clay County, Florida  
 By: Christina Spadea  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89784 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:** RAJENDRA INC., the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
**Certificate No.:** 1007/2020  
**Legal Description:** LOT 8 GENEVA ACRES AS REC O R 3460 PG 52 & 4180 PG 1774  
**Parcel ID No.:** 330823-004922-001-08  
**Opening Bid Amount:** \$3,474.89  
**Physical Address:** 7960 GUSTAFSON , KEYSTONE HEIGHTS  
**Classification:** VACANT RESIDENTIAL W/SPECIAL FEATURES OR YARD ITEM  
**Name in which assessed:** PAUL J HALL  
 Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida.  
 Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the **13th day of December, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com.**  
**Dated this 23rd day of October, 2023**  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clay County Clerk & Comptroller  
 Clay County, Florida  
 By: Christina Spadea  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89783 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:** RAJENDRA INC., the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
**Certificate No.:** 938/2021  
**Legal Description:** LOT 133 BLK 8 FLA FRONTIER REPLAT UNIT 1 AS REC O R 3617 PG 1603  
**Parcel ID No.:** 240823-007398-000-00

**Opening Bid Amount: \$1,307.17**  
**Physical Address:** 7669 MONONGAHELA AVE , KEYSTONE HEIGHTS  
**Classification:** VACANT RESIDENTIAL  
**Name in which assessed:** IBRAHEEM KHAMIS ALI BAMAGA  
 Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida.  
 Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the **13th day of December, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com.**  
**Dated this 23rd day of October, 2023**  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clay County Clerk & Comptroller  
 Clay County, Florida  
 By: Christina Spadea  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89782 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:** HENRY YEH, the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
**Certificate No.:** 2165/2017  
**Legal Description:** LOT 18 BLK 3 LAKESIDE TERRACE AS REC O R 610 PG 222 & 1557 PG 629  
**Parcel ID No.:** 140824-007104-000-00  
**Opening Bid Amount:** \$1,943.62  
**Physical Address:** 7207 QUAIL ST , FLORAHOME  
**Classification:** VACANT RESIDENTIAL  
**Name in which assessed:** RALPH & BECKY PRATER, BECKY PRATER  
 Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida.  
 Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the **13th day of December, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com.**  
**Dated this 23rd day of October, 2023**  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clay County Clerk & Comptroller  
 Clay County, Florida  
 By: Christina Spadea  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89781 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**SUMMONS AND NOTICE OF ACTION BY PUBLICATION**

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA**  
**CASE NO.:** 10-2022-DP-000064  
**DIVISION:** JV-E  
**IN THE INTEREST OF:**  
 L.V.  
 P.I.  
**MINOR CHILDREN**  
 THE STATE OF FLORIDA TO:  
 Kayla Williams, Mother  
 1657 Lisa Dawn Dr. Middleburg, FL 32068  
 Last Known Address  
**YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED** that a Petition has been filed in the above-styled Court by the FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES for termination of parental rights and permanent commitment for subsequent adoption of the above-named children, L.V. who was born on July 19, 2020, and P.I. who was born on January 26, 2022. You are hereby commanded to appear before the  
**Honorable Angela M. Cox**, at the Clay County Courthouse, Juvenile Dependency Courtroom, 825 North Orange Avenue, Green Cove Springs, Florida at the hour of **2:00 p.m.** o'clock on **November 28, 2023 A.D.** You must appear at the hearing on the date and time specified.  
**FAILURE TO PERSONALLY APPEAR AT THIS ADVISORY HEARING CONSTITUTES CONSENT TO THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS TO THESE CHILDREN. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR ON THE DATE AND TIME SPECIFIED YOU MAY LOSE ALL LEGAL RIGHTS TO THE CHILDREN NAMED IN THE PETITION.**  
**If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the Court ADA Coordinator at (904) 255-1695 or crintrp@coj.net at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled court appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.**  
 WITNESS my hand as clerk of said Court and the Seal thereof, this 19th day of October, 2023.  
 Tara S. Green  
 as Clerk of Said Court  
 By: Denise Haselwood  
 As Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 89431 Published 10/26/2023, 11/2/2023, 11/9/2023 and 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA**  
**CASE NO.:** 2023-CP-530  
**IN RE:**  
 ESTATE OF JERRY L. CULP, Deceased.  
**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** the adminis-

tration of the estate of JERRY L. CULP, deceased, Case Number: 2023-CP-553, is pending in the Circuit Court for Clay County, Probate Division, the address of which is 825 N. Orange Avenue, Orange Park, Florida 32043. The names and addresses of the Petitioner and the Petitioner's attorney are set forth below.  
 All creditors of the Decedent and other persons having claims or demands against Decedent's estate, including unmatured, contingent or unliquidated claims, on whom a copy of this notice is served must file their claims with this court WITHIN THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.  
 All creditors of the Decedent and other persons having claims or demands against Decedent's estate, including unmatured, contingent or unliquidated claims, must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.  
**ALL CLAIMS NOT SO FILED WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.**  
 The date of first publication of this Notice was November 16, 2023.  
 Attorney for Personal Representative:  
 David S. Fursteller, Esq.  
 9310 Old Kings Road S., Suite 702  
 Jacksonville, Florida 32257  
 Personal Representative  
 Jerri Wiesenfeld  
 9579 Broken Oak Boulevard  
 Jacksonville, Florida 32257  
**Legal 92138 Published 11/16/2023 and 11/23/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**LEGAL NOTICE**

A road closure will take place on November 27th, 2023. We will close Parkridge Avenue between Blanding Boulevard and Kingswood Avenue for approximately 12 hours.  
**Legal 92137 Published 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**PUBLIC SALE**

SCOTT'S AFFORDABLE TOWING INC gives Notice to sell the following vehicles for towing and storage lien on  
 December 7, 2023, at 10:00 AM at 2909 BLANDING BLVD MIDDLEBURG, FL 32068,  
 pursuant to subsection 713.78 of the Florida Statutes.  
 2010 Nissan ID# JN8AZ1M8UAW002837  
 2015 Volks ID# 1VWCV7A30FC073857  
 2012 Nissan ID# 5N1AR1NNOCC603288  
**Legal 92136 Published 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Board of County Commissioners of Clay County, Florida, will hold a public hearing Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as can be heard. The hearing will be held in the BCC Meeting Room, 4th Floor of the Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida. The public hearing is scheduled for the purpose of considering adoption of an ordinance entitled:  
**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA, RELATING TO ORDINANCE NO. 2021-48 AND ORDINANCE NO. 2022-55 WHICH IMPOSED A MORATORIUM ON ANY PROPOSED LAND USE AMENDMENT TO THE CLAY COUNTY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THAT EFFECTIVELY INCREASES THE ALLOWABLE RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES WITHIN THE LAKE ASBURY MASTER PLAN AREA OR ANY PROPOSED REZONING THAT EFFECTIVELY INCREASES THE ALLOWABLE RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES OF ANY PARCEL OF LAND WITHIN THE LAKE ASBURY MASTER PLAN AREA IN ORDER TO EXTEND THE MORATORIUM WHICH WILL EXPIRE ON DECEMBER 31, 2023; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING DIRECTIONS NOT TO CODIFY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**  
 Interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinance. After the public hearing the Board may take immediate action on the proposed ordinance, or may continue its deliberations to a date, time and place then announced without publishing further notice thereof. A copy of the proposed ordinance may be inspected by members of the public in the office of the Clay County County Attorney, Second Floor of the Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, with the exception of legal holidays. Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, a person desiring to appeal any decision made by the Board of County Commissioners with respect to any matter considered at the meeting or at any subsequent meeting to which the Board has continued its deliberations is advised that such person will need a record of all proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record of all proceedings is made, which must include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.  
 In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing accommodations to participate in this matter should contact Clay County Risk

Management by mail at P.O. Box 1366, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, or by telephone at (904) 278-4718, no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing or proceeding for which this notice has been given. Deaf and hard of hearing persons can access the telephone number by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (Voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).  
 Board of County Commissioners  
 Clay County, Florida  
**Legal 92134 Published 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**Notice of Public Sale**

On December 5, 2023, at 10 A.M. 246 Jefferson Ave, Orange Park, Florida 32065. The following vehicles will be auctioned off for towing and storage charges:  
 1993 FORD JFDKF37H3PNA89592  
 2007 CHEVY 2CNDL23FX76024436  
 2017 MITS JA4AD2A38HZ061336  
**Legal 92133 Published 11/16/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE**

BURGART ENTERPRISES TOWING INC. gives notice that on 12/01/2023 at 12:00 PM the following vehicles(s) may be sold by public sale at 4360 CR 218 MID-DLEBURG, FL 32068 to satisfy the lien for the amount owed on each vehicle for any recovery, towing, or storage services charges and administrative fees allowed pursuant to Florida statute 713.78.  
 1MEFM55564G611281 2004 MERC  
 2G1FF1EV1A9157782 2010 CHEV  
 4T1CA38P74U007888 2004 TOYT  
 JA3AM44HXWY001973 1998 MITS  
 KNAFX4A83E5047693 2014 KIA  
**Legal 92132 Published 11/16/2023 in**

Clay County's Clay Today newspaper

**NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE**

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 4TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA**  
**CIVIL DIVISION:**  
**CASE NO.:** 2023-CA-001262-  
**TOWD POINT MORTGAGE TRUST 2022-SJ1, U.S. BANK TRUST COMPANY N. A., AS INDENTURE TRUSTEE,**  
 Plaintiff,  
 vs.  
 EILENE E. ROACH A/K/A EILENE ROACH; UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF EILENE E. ROACH A/K/A EILENE ROACH; UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF ROBERT R. ROACH A/K/A ROBERT ROACH; UNKNOWN TENANT IN POSSESSION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY, Defendants.  
**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** pursuant to an Order or Final Judgment entered in the above styled cause now pending in said court and as required by Florida Statute 45.031(2), TARA S. GREEN as the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall sell to the highest and best bidder for cash electronically at **https://clay.realforeclose.com/ at 10:00 AM on the 13 day of December, 2023**, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit:  
**LOT 29, BLOCK 58, OF JACKSONVILLE SOUTH, UNIT TWO, AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 11, PAGES 1 TO 11, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.**  
**PROPERTY ADDRESS: 4542 MAYFLOWER ST, MIDDLEBURG, FL 32068**  
**IF YOU ARE A PERSON CLAIMING A RIGHT TO FUNDS REMAINING AFTER THE SALE, YOU MUST FILE A CLAIM WITH THE CLERK NO LATER THAN THE DATE THAT THE CLERK REPORTS THE FUNDS AS UNCLAIMED.**

**IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A CLAIM, YOU WILL NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY REMAINING FUNDS. AFTER THE FUNDS ARE REPORTED AS UNCLAIMED, ONLY THE OWNER OF RECORD AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MAY CLAIM THE SURPLUS.**  
**If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the ADA Coordinator at crintrp@coj.net or (904) 255-1695 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.**  
 Dated this 13th day of November, 2023.  
 TARA S. GREEN  
 Clerk Of The Circuit Court  
 By: Jennifer Brosky  
 Deputy Clerk  
**Legal 92144 Published 11/16/2023 and 11/23/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper**

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All ads are non-refundable. Please check your ad copy the first week of publication. We will only apply credit for the first run and credits are subject to approval of the publisher. If ad is canceled prior to the first insertion cancellation must be made by classified deadline of Monday by noon. Ads must comply with Federal, State

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